







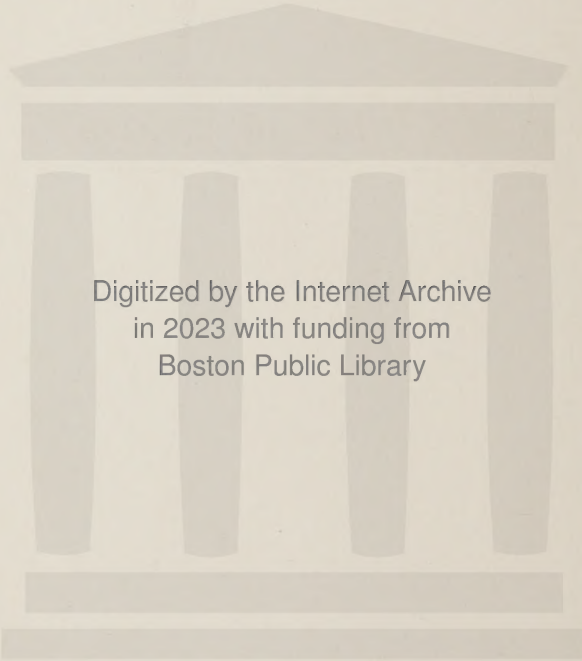
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THE HIGHER STUDY OF ENGLISH







# THE HIGHER STUDY OF ENGLISH

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## PREFACE

THE reader who takes up this little book should be warned that he must not expect a systematic treatise. These four papers are of a strictly occasional nature, since even the second was written in response to an invitation from the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, and the subject of the fourth was suggested in the letter which requested me to deliver the address. Hence they are not mutually exclusive — indeed, the critical reader will discover that in some instances they overlap — though perhaps they may fairly be said to be mutually supplementary. Slight changes have been made in the text of the first and second papers, and the foot-notes to these are new. Of the Vassar address a portion is omitted at the beginning. In other respects the papers are reproduced essentially without change.

ALBERT S. COOK.

GREENSBORO, VERMONT,  
August 11, 1906.







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# I

## THE PROVINCE OF ENGLISH PHILOLOGY







## THE PROVINCE OF ENGLISH PHILOLOGY<sup>1</sup>

PERHAPS no reproach is oftener addressed to those who call themselves philologists than that they are unconcerned with that beauty which has furnished a distinctive epithet for the word 'literature' in the phrase *belles-lettres*, that they lack imagination and insight, and that they are quite unfitted to impart to others a sense of the spiritual values which inhere in the productions that form the subject-matter of their studies. An eloquent writer, who is himself a capable investigator, has recently presented this view in an essay which deserves the attention of every teacher of literature, and especially of every teacher of English literature.

I make no apology for quoting a rather long extract from the essay in question, since the arraignment puts into definite form what a good many people have been feeling and intimating, and the philologist is bound to meet the attack, either by mending his ways, or by showing that

<sup>1</sup> Address as President of the Modern Language Association of America, at its Annual Meeting held at the University of Pennsylvania, December, 1897.



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the critic, with the best intentions in the world, has not fully comprehended the purposes of philology, or has perhaps taken a part for the whole. Here, then, is the passage: <sup>1</sup>

And so very whimsical things sometimes happen, because of this scientific and positivist spirit of the age, when the study of the literature of any language is made part of the curriculum of our colleges. The more delicate and subtle purposes of the study are put quite out of countenance, and literature is commanded to assume the phrases and the methods of science. . . . It is obvious that you cannot have universal education without restricting your teaching to such things as can be universally understood. It is plain that you cannot impart 'university methods' to thousands, or create 'investigators' by the score, unless you confine your university education to matters which dull men can investigate, your laboratory training to tasks which mere plodding diligence and submissive patience can compass. Yet, if you do so limit and constrain what you teach, you thrust taste and insight and delicacy of perception out of the schools, exalt the obvious and the merely useful above the things which are only imaginatively or spiritually conceived, make education an affair of tasting and handling and smelling. . . .

You have nowadays, it is believed, only to heed the suggestions of pedagogics in order to know how to

<sup>1</sup> Woodrow Wilson, *Mere Literature, and Other Essays*, 1896, pp. 2-5.



impart Burke or Browning, Dryden or Swift. There are certain practical difficulties, indeed; but there are ways of overcoming them. You must have strength if you would handle with real mastery the firm fibre of these men; you must have a heart, moreover, to feel their warmth, an eye to see what they see, an imagination to keep them company, a pulse to experience their delights. But if you have none of these things, you may make shift to do without them. You may count the words they use, instead, note the changes of phrase they make in successive revisions, put their rhythm into a scale of feet, run their allusions — particularly their female allusions — to cover, detect them in their previous reading. Or, if none of these things please you, or you find the big authors difficult or dull, you may drag to light all the minor writers of their time, who are easy to understand.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Compare with this the beginning of his preface to *The English Works of George Herbert* (1905), where Professor Palmer, of Harvard University, says: 'There are few to whom this book will seem worth while. It embodies long labor, spent on a minor poet, and will probably never be read entire by any one. But that is a reason for its existence. Lavishness is in its aim. The book is a box of spikenard, poured in unappeasable love over one who has attended my life. . . . There are public reasons too. The tendencies of an age appear more distinctly in its writers of inferior rank than in those of commanding genius. These latter tell of past and future as well as of the years in which they live. They are for all time. But on the sensitive, responsive souls, of less creative power, current ideals record themselves with clearness. Whoever, then, values literary history will be glad to seek out the gentle and incomplete poet. . . . A small writer so studied becomes large.'



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By setting an example in such methods you render great services in certain directions. You make the higher degrees of our universities available for the large number of respectable men who can count, and measure, and search diligently; and that may prove no small matter. You divert attention from thought, which is not always easy to get at, and fix attention upon language, as upon a curious mechanism, which can be perceived with the bodily eye, and which is worthy to be studied for its own sake, quite apart from anything it may mean. You encourage the examination of forms, grammatical and metrical, which can be quite accurately determined and quite exhaustively catalogued. You bring all the visible phenomena of writing to light and into ordered system. You go further, and show how to make careful literal identification of stories somewhere told ill and without art with the same stories told over again by the masters, well and with the transfiguring effect of genius. You thus broaden the area of science; for you rescue the concrete phenomena of the expression of thought — the necessary syllabification which accompanies it, the inevitable juxtaposition of words, the constant use of particles, the habitual display of roots, the inveterate repetition of names, the recurrent employment of meanings heard or read — from their confusion with the otherwise unclassifiable manifestations of what had hitherto been accepted, without critical examination, under the lump term 'literature,' simply for the pleasure and spiritual edification to be got from it.



This is a stern indictment to bring against the philologist — the ‘mere philologist,’ as our author might say — and if it contains the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; if things are quite as bad as here represented, and the fault is the fault of certain innovators, who usurp the domain of better men with their science falsely so-called; then it behooves us to be on our guard, lest we also be entangled in the net they have woven for their own feet, and so become involved with them in a common destruction.

Let us first see, however, whether some of these matters are susceptible of being differently stated. And first, is it quite certain that the evils complained of are due to the scientific and positivist spirit of this age, and to the effort after universal education? It is more than two thousand years since Herodicus described the followers of the critic Aristarchus as ‘buzzing in corners, busy with monosyllables.’ It is more than eighteen hundred years since Seneca thus declaimed <sup>1</sup> against what he understood by the philological study of literature:

A grammarian occupies himself with the care of speech, or, if he takes a wider view of his art, possibly with history. The most that he can do is to extend its limits so as to include poetry. Which of

<sup>1</sup> *Epist.* 88, somewhat freely translated (Camelot Series) by Walter Clode, following Thomas Lodge.



these openeth a way to virtue? Doth the unfolding of syllables, the niceties of speech, the memory of fables, or the law and syntax of verses? Which of these taketh away fear, casteth out covetousness, bridleth lust? . . . Let us grant unto them that Homer was a philosopher; in that case he must have learnt wisdom before he wrote poetry; wherefore let us learn those things which made Homer a wise man. . . . What supposest thou that it profiteth to inquire into the ages of Patroclus and Achilles? Seekest thou rather Ulysses' errors than seest how thou canst prevent thine own? There is no time for hearing whether Ulysses was shipwrecked between Italy and Sicily, or passed the boundaries of the known world. . . . Tempests of the mind do daily toss us, and vice driveth us into all the evils which Ulysses suffered. Beauty there is to beguile the eyes, and she cometh not in the guise of a foe: hence come cruel monsters, which delight in men's blood; hence come deceitful allurements of the ears; hence shipwrecks, and so many varieties of evil. Teach me this thing — how I may love my country, my wife, and my father; how even suffering shipwreck, I may steer my ship into so virtuous a haven.

Here, then, is a strong argument against literary scholarship. Observe at once its admirable cogency and its comprehensive sweep. The goal of all education should be to render men wise and virtuous; therefore wisdom and virtue should be taught directly, to the exclusion of all



other matters. How obvious and how convincing! The objection to literary scholarship has the same force as applied to other studies. This is apparent from the very title of Seneca's essay, *That the Liberal Arts are not to be classed among Good Things, and contribute Nothing to Virtue*. But let us hear his own application of the principle — enounced earlier by Diogenes the Cynic — to the study of music and geometry :

Let us pass to geometry and music ; nothing shalt thou find in them which forbiddeth fear, or forbiddeth covetousness, of which whosoever is ignorant, in vain knoweth other things. . . . Thou teachest me how there cometh a harmony from sharp and bass sounds, and how a chord may be composed of dissonant strings. Do thou make rather that my mind may be in harmony with itself, and that my counsels be not out of time. . . . Thou knowest what a straight line is ; what profiteth it thee, if thou art ignorant of what is crooked in life ?

But there is another argument against all learning, or rather against all learning except philosophy. Learning is a positive incumbrance. The mind is limited in its capacity. There is only a given amount of space in the mind to include everything. All the room occupied by learning is so much subtracted from that which might have harbored virtue. Hear once more the incomparable Seneca : ‘ Of whatsoever



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part of divine and human affairs thou takest hold, thou shalt be wearied with the huge abundance of things to be sought out and to be learned. . . . Virtue will not lodge itself in so narrow a room ; a great matter desireth a large space ; let all else be driven out, let the whole breast be empty for it.'

With Seneca, the conclusion of the whole matter is extremely simple. Philosophy is the science which teaches wisdom and virtue. Therefore neglect everything else, and study philosophy. In his own words :

Philosophy . . . raiseth the whole structure, foundations and all. Mathematics, so to speak, is a superficial art ; it buildeth upon another's foundations, it receiveth its principles from others, by the benefit of which it cometh to further conclusions. If, by its own exertions, it could come to truth, if it could comprehend the nature of the whole world, I should be more grateful to it. The mind is made perfect by one thing — namely, by the unchangeable knowledge of good and bad things, for which alone philosophy is competent. But none other art inquireth about good and bad things.

But, unfortunately, the trail of the serpent is over philosophy, even. Seneca cannot help admitting that his very philosophers are not quite what they should be. 'I speak,' says he, 'of liberal studies ; how much of what is useless do



philosophers possess, how much of what is unpractical! They also have descended to the distinction of syllables, and to the proprieties of conjunctions and prepositions, and to envy grammarians, to envy geometricians. . . . Thus it is come to pass that, with all their diligence, they know rather to speak than to live.'

Now I would not be understood as instituting a parallel in all respects between the able and brilliant writer first quoted, with certain of whose positions I find myself in agreement, and the moralist who thus ruthlessly, like another Caliph Omar, would sweep away all learning from the face of the earth. Yet I cannot help seeing in the essay of the former an implication that taste and insight and delicacy of perception shall be imparted directly by the schools, in a manner not dissimilar, it may be apprehended, to that in which the Senecan wisdom and virtue were to be taught. Perhaps this is possible; I would that it were. Is there one who listens to me who would not gladly devote his whole energies to the direct communication of taste and insight and delicacy of perception, and still more of wisdom and virtue, were that possible without the adventitious aid of learning? If we could train the mind to exact and severe thinking, to endure the toil involved in continuous attention to the same subject, without invoking the pro-



cesses of mathematical science, or any equivalent discipline, to come to our assistance, how the college curriculum might speedily be relieved of one of its heaviest burdens ! But we have already seen that even Seneca's philosophers were not quite equal to his demands ; they also 'descended to the distinction of syllables, and to the proprieties of conjunctions and prepositions.' These philosophers must have felt, at least, after Seneca's rebuke, how far they were derogating from the inwardness of their mission. Yet, if they lived a quarter of a century longer, they were surely not a little comforted by the utterances of Quintilian, who in one place says : <sup>1</sup>

Was Cicero the less of an orator because he was most attentive to the study of grammar, and because, as appears from his letters, he was a rigid exactor, on all occasions, of correct language from his son ? Did the writings of Julius Cæsar *On Analogy* diminish the vigor of his intellect ? Or was Messala less elegant as a writer because he devoted whole books, not merely to single words, but even to single letters ? These studies are injurious, not to those who pass through them, but to those who dwell immoderately on them.

But are modern times barren of such instances as Quintilian has noted ? Milton, great poet that he was, did not disdain to write an *Accidence*

<sup>1</sup> *Inst.* 1. 7. 34, 35.



*commenced Grammar*, and I have never heard that his poetry was the worse for it. Milton's exemplar, the first poet of Italy, a man eminent for taste and insight and delicacy of perception, as well as for wisdom and virtue, wrote a book *On the Vernacular Language*, which he began on this wise :

Since we do not find that any one before us has treated of the science of the vernacular language, while in fact we see that this tongue is highly necessary for all, inasmuch as not only men, but even women and children, strive, in so far as nature allows them, to acquire it; and since it is our wish to enlighten to some little extent the discernment of those who walk through the streets like blind men, generally fancying that those things which are really in front of them are behind them; we will endeavor, the Word aiding us from heaven, to be of service to the vernacular speech; not only drawing the water of our own wit for such a drink, but mixing with it the best of what we have taken or compiled from others.

In this work, he whom the difficulties of language had never prevented from saying just what he desired to say, went on to write chapters whose titles are such as these: 'On the Dialect of Romagna, and Some of the Dialects beyond the Po, especially the Venetian;' 'Of the Structure of the Lines, and their Variation by means of Syllables;' 'Of what Lines Stanzas are made,



and of the Number of Syllables in the Lines ;' 'Of the Relation of the Rimes, and in what order they are to be placed in the Stanza ;' 'Of the Number of Lines and Syllables in the Stanza.' Does it not look as though Dante had, in the words of our critic, come perilously near to rescuing from their confusion with literature 'the concrete phenomena of the expression of thought—the necessary syllabification which accompanies it, the inevitable juxtaposition of words' ?

Passing over such men as Ben Jonson, who wrote an English grammar, and made an extensive collection of the grammars of various languages, but at the same time set the fashions in English literature for several decades, let us dwell for a moment on the authors cited above as deserving better treatment than they are likely to receive at the hands of the modern expositor. Is it possible that the attitude of Burke and Browning, of Dryden and Swift, toward philological investigation, is in any respect similar to that of Dante and of Milton ? I turn to Burke's essay *On the Sublime and Beautiful*, and find such headings as these : 'Color considered as productive of the Sublime ;' 'Smell and Taste ; Bitters and Stenches ;' 'The Effect of Words ;' 'How Words influence the Passions.' Moreover, I find in this work such passages as the follow-



ing:<sup>1</sup> 'It is hard to repeat certain sets of words, though owned by themselves unoperative, without being in some degree affected, especially if a warm and affecting tone of voice accompanies them; as suppose, —

Wise, valiant, generous, good, and great.

These words, by having no application, ought to be unoperative; but when words commonly sacred to great occasions are used, we are affected by them even without the occasions.'

I turn to Browning, and, reading *The Grammarian's Funeral*, cannot doubt that he was in sympathy with the character he has so vividly and feelingly delineated.

I turn to Dryden, and find him writing in this vein:<sup>2</sup> 'Thus it appears necessary that a man should be a nice critic in his mother tongue before he attempts to translate a foreign language. Neither is it sufficient that he be able to judge of words and style, but he must be a master of them too; he must perfectly understand his author's tongue, and absolutely command his own.' Again he says: 'All the versification and little variety of Claudian is included within the compass of four or five lines, and then he begins again in the same tenor; perpetually closing his sense at the end of a verse, and that verse com-

<sup>1</sup> Part 5, sect. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Essay on Translation*.



monly what they call golden, or two substantives and two adjectives, with a verb betwixt them to keep the peace.' Does not this look like the prefigurement of a modern inquiry into end-stopped and run-on lines?

I turn to Swift, and am reminded by the revival of the proposition to establish an English Academy that he wrote a *Proposal for correcting, improving, and ascertaining the English Tongue*, involving the creation of a society similar to the French Academy for that purpose.

Even the author who instances Burke and Browning, Dryden and Swift, as writers who should be interpreted in a larger and freer manner, is willing, in a noble oration, to affirm: 'What you cannot find a substitute for is the classics as literature; and there can be no first-hand contact with that literature if you will not master the grammar and the syntax which convey its subtle power.' From this it would appear that it is proper to master the grammar and syntax of the *ancient* classics; which he who will may harmonize with the objections which were quoted at the beginning of these remarks.

Recalling those objections, we have seen that they were in some measure anticipated centuries ago; that Seneca would have had all ancillary study of literature replaced by the direct inculca-



tion of the essential qualities or virtues that literature embodies ; that his criticism held equally true of all liberal studies except philosophy, and that even philosophy was not exempt from his censure ; but that, on the other hand, some of the noblest statesmen, orators, and poets have busied themselves with the very inquiries which we have heard so unsparingly condemned ; and that we are thus presented with the singular anomaly that that is forbidden to the humble expounder of classic authors which was practised and recommended by the classical authors themselves ; and that is forbidden to the student of our own literature which is reckoned, by the same authority, as highly laudable in a student of the masterpieces of antiquity.

There must, one would infer, be something inherently attractive and valuable about learning which enables it to survive such attacks as those of Seneca ; there must be something inherently attractive and valuable about the learning which occupies itself with literature, to make it the concern of so many magnanimous spirits, and to extort vindications from the antagonists who come out armed to destroy it. Perhaps the explanation is to be sought in Aristotle's famous sentence, 'All men by nature desire to know.' Perhaps the justification has been furnished by Seneca himself, who elsewhere asks why we



instruct our children in liberal studies, and answers, 'Not because they can give virtue, but because they prepare the mind to the receiving of it.' Possibly, then, virtue may sometimes be best suggested by indirection; perhaps, too, the same is true of taste and insight; it may be that they come not with observation, or at least not exclusively with observation; it may be that they who devotedly study any aspect of great works receive of their spirit, even as one may approach the one spirit of Nature through the different channels of astronomy, chemistry, and zoölogy. A lover of literature and of all forms of beauty, too early lost to his University and the world — I refer to the late Professor McLaughlin — in an essay in which he pleaded for the recognition of the spiritual element in literature, was yet fain to admit:<sup>1</sup> 'The first steps toward the desired results must be prosaic; people must train themselves, or be trained, to see what is on the surface, to grow conscious of metrical differences, for instance; not to remain quite blind to the real meaning beneath a figurative turn; even to come to recognize that there is a figurative turn.'

If we could take this view to heart, perhaps the difficulties which perplex so many earnest seekers after truth, as they consider the subject, would vanish away, or at any rate become less

<sup>1</sup> *Literary Criticism for Students*, pp. viii, ix.



formidable. According to this mode of looking at the matter, taste and insight and delicacy of perception are by no means common in an era of universal education, nor indeed in any era whatever; the person who possesses them in only a rudimentary degree is as likely to be repelled as attracted by a sudden revelation of their austere charms; in this, as in everything else, the natural progress is by easy stages from the phenomenal to the noumenal, from the things of sense to the things of the spirit; and accordingly the science which undertakes to deal with the forms in which the human spirit has, in various epochs, manifested itself, especially through the medium of literature, must be prepared to take account of the phenomenal no less than the noumenal, and accompany the seeker along the whole scale of ascent from the one to the other.

But is there any such science? There is; its name is Philology; and in no other sense than as designating this science should the term 'philology' be used, unless with some qualifying term which limits its meaning in a specific and unmistakable manner.

The function of the philologist, then, is the endeavor to relive the life of the past; to enter by the imagination into the spiritual experiences of all the historic protagonists of civilization in a given period and area of culture; to think the



thoughts, to feel the emotions, to partake the aspirations, recorded in literature; to become one with humanity in the struggles of a given nation or race to perceive and attain the ideal of existence; and then to judge rightly these various disclosures of the human spirit, and to reveal to the world their true significance and relative importance.

In compassing this end, the philologist will have much to do; much that is not only laborious, but that even, in itself considered, might justly be regarded as distasteful, or even repellent. He must examine and compare the records of the human spirit bequeathed us by the past, and, before doing this, must often exhume them perhaps, in a mutilated condition, from the libraries and monasteries where they may have been moldering for ages; he must piece them together, where they have been separated and dispersed; interpret them; correct their manifest errors, so far as this may safely be done in the light of fuller information; determine their meaning and their worth; and then deliver them to the world, freed, as far as may be, from the injuries inflicted by time and evil chance, with their sense duly ascertained, their message clearly set forth, and their contribution to the sum of human attainment justly and sympathetically estimated.



This is the work that has been done, and is still in process of doing, for the Sacred Scriptures; for Homer, Sophocles, and Pindar among the Greeks; for Virgil, Lucretius, Tacitus, and Juvenal among the Romans; for the Italian Dante and Ariosto; for the French *Chansons de Geste*, no less than for Ronsard, Molière, and Rousseau; for the *Nibelungenlied* and Goethe among the Germans; for Cynewulf, Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton among the English; and for a multitude of others of whom these may stand as types.

The ideal philologist is at once antiquary, palæographer, grammarian, lexicologist, expounder, critic, historian of literature, and, above all, lover of humanity. He should have the accuracy of the scientist, the thirst for discovery of the Arctic explorer, the judgment of the man of affairs, the sensibility of the musician, the taste of the connoisseur, and the soul of the poet. He must shrink from no labor, and despise no detail, by means of which he may be enabled to reach his goal more surely, and laden with richer results. Before traversing unknown seas, he must appropriate every discovery made by his predecessors on similar quests, and avail himself of every improvement upon their methods which his imagination can suggest, and his judgment approve. He will be instant in season



and out of season. Whatsoever his hand finds to do he will do with his might. He will choose the task which humanity most needs to have performed, and at the same time that in which his own powers and special equipment can be most fully utilized; and, when possible, he will give the preference to such labors as shall afford play and outreach to his nobler faculties, rather than to such as may dwarf and impoverish them.

According to the exigencies which circumstances create, or his own intuition perceives, he will edit dictionaries, like Johnson or Murray; make lexicons to individual authors, like Schmidt; compile concordances, like Bartlett or Ellis; investigate metre, like Sievers or Schipper; edit authors, as Skeat has edited Chaucer, Child the English and Scottish Ballads, and Furness Shakespeare; discourse on the laws of literature, like Sidney, or Ben Jonson, or Lewes, or Walter Pater; write literary biography, like Brandl or Dowden; or outline the features and progress of a national literature, like Ten Brink, or Stopford Brooke, or Taine.

The ideal philologist must, therefore, have gained him 'the gains of various men, ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes.' Yet withal he must be content, if fortune, or his sense of a potential universe hidden in his apparently insignificant



task, will have it so, merely to settle *hoti's* business, properly base *oun*, or give us the doctrine of the enclitic *de* — sure that posterity, while it may ungratefully forget him, will at least have cause to bless his name, as that of one without whose strenuous and self-sacrificing exertions the poets, the orators, the historians, and the philosophers would have less completely yielded up their meaning, or communicated their inspiration, to an expectant and needy world.

That the philologist, as such, is not necessarily a creative literary artist, is no impugment of his mission or its importance. Neither is he who expounds the law, or the doctrines of Christianity, necessarily a creative literary artist. Yet he may be ; Erskine was, and Webster ; and so were Robert South and Cardinal Newman in their sermons. To be learned is not necessarily to be dull, for Burke was learned, and Chaucer, and Cicero, and Homer. Petrarch was not dull ; and all the philology of modern times goes back to Petrarch.

If we seek for philologists who may fairly be ranked among reputable authors, the brothers Grimm wrote fairy stories quite as charmingly as Perrault ; Hallam says of Politian that his poem displayed more harmony, spirit, and imagination than any that had been written since the death of Petrarch ; and the same writer calls



the *History and Annals* of Grotius a monument of vigorous and impressive language. Professor Lounsbury says of Tyrwhitt, 'His literary taste can be described as almost unerring.' The style of Erasmus has been called clear, lively, expressive rather than regular, sparkling with sallies and *verve*. Sainte-Beuve, who by his profession of critic comes well within the definition of the philologist, is of course one of the literary glories of France. Croiset, the author of *La Poésie de Pindare*, is an author whom one finds it difficult to lay down when his book has once been taken in hand. Sellar's accounts of the Roman poets can be read with the utmost pleasure by any one at all interested in the subject. The charm of Max Müller's writing is well known. One might go on to enumerate Jebb, and Gildersleeve, and Jowett, and Mahaffy — but why extend a list which any one can continue for himself? Enough has been said to show that the pursuit of philology is not incompatible with literary power and grace — as why indeed should it be?

But it has been observed that dull men crowd into the profession, men who can only count and catalogue, or who, to employ the language of Chapman in *The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois*,<sup>1</sup> are

<sup>1</sup> Act 2, scene 1.



Of taste so much depraved, that they had rather  
 Delight, and satisfy themselves to drink  
 Of the stream troubled, wandering ne'er so far  
 From the clear fount, than of the fount itself.

Alas, it is but too true! Heaven-sent geniuses are rare, and there is not room for all the dull men in the other professions. Moreover, great poets are sometimes averse to spending their lives in the professor's chair, when they can write *Idylls of the King* and *Men and Women*. Also, there is no recipe by which to convert dull men into heaven-sent geniuses, and the preponderance of the former class everywhere is an evil not sufficiently to be deplored. Then, too, some of us must do the intellectual hewing of wood and drawing of water for the rest, and how should this be were no dull men to interest themselves in literature? Finally, we can always fall back upon the reasons assigned by Longinus — if it was indeed he who wrote the immortal *Treatise on the Sublime* — Longinus, a man whom Plotinus allowed to be a philologist, but in no sense a philosopher. Thus he moralizes: 'It is a matter of wonder that in the present age, which produces many highly skilled in the arts of popular persuasion, many of keen and active powers, many especially rich in every pleasing gift of language, the growth of highly exalted and wide-reaching genius has, with a few



rare exceptions, almost entirely ceased. . . . It is so easy, and so characteristic of human nature, always to find fault with the present. Consider, now, whether the corruption of genius is to be attributed, not to a world-wide peace, but rather to the war within us which knows no limit, which engages all our desires, yes, and still further to the bad passions which lay siege to us to-day, and make utter havoc and spoil of our lives. Are we not enslaved, nay, are not our careers completely shipwrecked, by love of gain, that fever which rages unappeased in us all, and love of pleasure? — one the most debasing, the other the most ignoble, of the mind's diseases.' If there are no better men forthcoming as expounders of English literature, may it not be that the requisite talents are attracted to more lucrative pursuits rather than that the fault is with the tendency of education to become universal?

It is singular, however, that men whom no one would think of calling dull practise on occasion the arts that we have heard condemned. Thus Professor Dowden, in his very newest book, his volume of selections from Wordsworth,<sup>1</sup> so far from thinking it a sin, in dealing with the poets, to 'note the changes of phrase they make in successive revisions,' expressly says, 'From no other English poet can lessons in the poetic

<sup>1</sup> *Poems by William Wordsworth*, p. lxxxv.



craft so full, so detailed, and so instructive be obtained as those to be had by one who follows Wordsworth through the successive editions, and puts to himself the repeated question, "For what reason was this change, for what reason was that, introduced?"' Gaston Paris, too, who is said to be unsurpassed as a lecturer on the felicities of style, is best known to the world by researches which quite surely fall under the condemnation already cited.

Philology is frequently considered to be identical with linguistics. This is an error which cannot be sufficiently deprecated. It results in the estrangement of the study of language from that of literature, with which, in the interests of both, it should be most intimately associated. The study of language is apt to seem arid and repellent to those who do not perceive how essential it is to the comprehension of literature. The conception of linguistics as a totally independent branch of learning, and the bestowal upon it of the appellation which properly designates the whole study of the history of culture, especially through the medium of literature, is fraught with incalculable injury to the pursuit of both divisions of the subject. Professor Saintsbury deplores this separation in a recent work. He says too truly:<sup>1</sup> 'With some honorable excep-

<sup>1</sup> *History of Nineteenth Century Literature*, p. 460.



tions, we find critics of literature too often divided into linguists who seem neither to think nor to be capable of thinking of the meaning or the melody, of the individual and technical mastery, of an author, a book, or a passage, and into loose æsthetic rhetoricians who will sometimes discourse on *Æschylus* without knowing a second aorist from an Attic perfect, and pronounce eulogies or depreciations on *Virgil* without having the faintest idea whether there is or is not any authority for *quamvis* with one mood rather than another.' He adds: 'It is not wonderful, though it is in the highest degree unhealthy, that the stricter scholars should be more or less scornfully relinquishing the province of literary criticism altogether, while the looser æsthetics consider themselves entitled to neglect scholarship in any proper sense with a similarly scornful indifference.'

I hope we shall all concur with Professor Saintsbury in this opinion. Such mutual distrust, not to say dislike, *is* in the highest degree unhealthy. Why should not all thoughtful students of English call themselves philologists, and thus recognize that they are all virtually aiming at the same thing, notwithstanding that they approach the subject from different points of view, and in practice emphasize different aspects of their common theme?



It may perhaps be objected that this would be equivalent to attributing an arbitrary and novel signification to the word philology. In this presence, I need only advert to the fact that in Germany the meaning I advocate is recognized as the only tenable one by all the recent authorities. More than a hundred years ago, Wolf, acting in part under the inspiration of Goethe, outlined the conception which in more recent times has been developed by Boeckh, and from him has been adopted by all the chief authors or editors of systematic treatises dealing with the philology of the various nations or races. While they differ more or less with respect to the expediency of including certain subdivisions of this department of knowledge in their survey, on the essential point such scholars as Paul, Gröber, Körting, and Elze, all agree. No one who has not reflected long and deeply upon the conception elaborated by Boeckh can realize how fruitful it proves, and how fully it satisfies the demand for a philosophy of our work which shall recognize at once the part played in its advancement by the intuitions of genius and by the humbler labors of the compiler and systematizer.

Many people are misled by forming a wrong notion of the etymology of the term we have been discussing. 'Does not λόγος mean "word"?'



say they; 'how then can philology signify anything else than a study of words?' — whereupon they complacently identify philology with etymology. But the initial mistake is a serious one. If one traces the use of *φιλολογία* and *φιλόλογος* in classical Greek and Latin, he will find something quite different. The philologist was originally one who loved the tales of history or old romance, and then one who was fond of all sorts of learning which naturally grew out of this love for dwelling on the records of the past. Thus a philologist was distinctively literary in his tastes; not always philosophical, but always prevailingly literary. Since literature employed speech as its medium, he of course became an investigator of speech, but — and this is a most important consideration — his interest in language grew out of his interest in literature, and his dominant concern with language was in its capacity as the organ of literary communication. Boeckh has pointed out that a compound which would have expressed to the ancients what we often mean by linguistic study would have had to be formed with *γλῶσσα* — like our 'glossonomy' — and not with *λόγος*. It is the use of the expression 'comparative philology' in the sense of 'glossonomy' or 'glossology' which has wrought the mischief. If one regards *λόγος* as standing for the typical revelation of itself by



the human soul, and also for the faculty chiefly instrumental in effecting this revelation — for *oratio* and *ratio*, as the Romans said — the term philology assumes its rightful dignity and breadth, and designates one of the noblest employments to which a human being can dedicate himself. He who cherishes this ideal will not thereby become an ideal philologist, but he will be less likely to strive as one that beateth the air; he will perceive that his ultimate concern is with the human soul, and all his collecting, and comparing, and criticizing, will subserve the one end of enabling the voices of the past, and especially the thrilling and compelling voices, to sound more audibly and tunefully in the ear of his own and future generations.

We must never forget that the philologist is a lover. As Pythagoras was not willing to be called a wise man, but only a lover of wisdom, and thus coined the word philosophy, so the philologist may well be content to call himself a lover too — a lover of the thrilling and compelling voices of the past. He becomes a philologist, if he is worthy of the name, because they have thrilled and compelled him; and he would fain devise means, however circuitous in appearance, by which to insure that they shall thrill and compel others. His sensibility is the measure of his devotion; and his devotion, while it may not



be the measure of his success, is certainly its indispensable condition.

If then, philology, truly considered, enlists the head in the service of the heart; if it demands not only high and manifold discipline, but rich natural endowment; if its object is the revelation to the present of the spiritual attainments of the past; if it aims to win free access for the thoughts of the mightiest thinkers, and the dreams of the most visionary of poets; if it seeks to train the imagination to re-create the form and pressure of a vanished time, in order to stimulate our own age to equal or surpass its predecessors in whatever best illustrates and enobles humanity; if there are not wanting numerous examples of poets who have been philologists, and philologists who have been essentially poets; and, finally, if philology is the only term which thus fully comprehends these various aspects of a common subject, and we have the most authoritative precedents for employing it in that signification; shall we willingly allow the word to be depreciated, and the largeness and unity of the corresponding conception imperiled, by consenting to employ it for the designation of a single branch of the comprehensive whole, and that the branch which, to the popular apprehension, least exhibits the real import and aim of the science? If not, and we are willing to be



known as philologists in the truer and larger sense, can we not do something to make this sense the prevalent one, by consistently adhering to it in our practice, and, so far as possible, inducing others to accept and adopt it? By thus doing, we shall not only be recognizing a truth which is indisputable, but also be promoting that harmony of opinions and sentiments without which the most strenuous individual efforts are certain to prove in some degree nugatory.







## II

### THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH







## THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH<sup>1</sup>

ENGLISH literature sprang at the outset from the impulse felt by an untutored Yorkshire peasant, in the seventh century of our era, to express in the vernacular his sense of the power and goodness of God, as manifested in the work of creation. His disposition and ability thus to employ his native speech were immediately utilized by the abbeys and philanthropic scholars of a neighboring monastery in the rendering of Scriptural narrative and homiletic reflections into Northumbrian alliterative verse, having in view the moral improvement of the common people, to whom Latin was an unknown tongue.

Throughout the Old English period — say to the Norman Conquest — this effort to popularize the treasures of Christian learning, which otherwise must have remained the exclusive property of the scholarly few, is accountable for the chief part of the literature produced. The clergy were ordered to repeat the Creed and the Lord's Prayer in English; homilies were composed in it; Bede's church history, Pope Gregory's *Pas-*

<sup>1</sup> *Atlantic Monthly*, May, 1901.



*toral Care*, and Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* were translated by Alfred, or under his supervision; the lives of saints and Biblical personages were written in prose or paraphrased in verse; the poor, in all ways, had the gospel preached to them. On the other hand, the tribal kings compiled codes of customary law, embodying the legal practices which prevailed among an unsophisticated folk, and comprehending the few and simple relations which the members of a tribe or province sustained to one another. Add the first annalistic jottings of historical occurrences, and the poems dealing with the exploits of popular heroes, and you have all, and more than all, that can fairly be termed *belles-lettres* down to near the period of the Norman Conquest. It was a literature of the people and for the people, and at least to some extent, as in the case of Cædmon, by the people.

Centuries passed, and the institutions which had once represented enlightenment and advancement were now either become corrupt, or seemed likely to oppose further progress. Reform was inevitable, and reform at length arrived.

What we call the Reformation was an uprising of the people against the privileged classes — against the degenerate monastic orders and the rule of Rome, but also, as the sequel showed,



against absolute monarchy and feudal oppression. Rome professed to be exercising only her immemorial rights; monarchy and feudalism insisted that they were the very institutions by which England had always been governed. Appeal was made against both to English antiquity, to the literature of the pre-Norman period; and thus it happened that in the wreck of the monastic houses, when the Reformers were reforming so much out of existence, it was precisely the Old English manuscripts which stood the best chance of preservation, and which — though many were doubtless lost — were collected and treasured up by Leland, Archbishop Parker, Joscelin, and their assistants. Lambarde published the Old English laws, Parker the life of Alfred written by Asser, Parker and Foxe the Old English translation of the Gospels, Parker and Joscelin Ælfric's *Paschal Homily* and other writings bearing on the question of transubstantiation, and Hakluyt the voyage of Ohthere in a translation from the account by King Alfred — all before the year 1600. English scholarship — by which I here mean scholarship having reference to the English language and literature — had thus made a definite beginning between the birth of Shakespeare and the death of Elizabeth. As Old English literature was of and for the people, so English scholarship originated in obedience



to the democratic instinct, and was the creation of a popular want. It was evoked to overthrow sacerdotalism and to undermine prescriptive rule of every sort, and it is not surprising that its influence has been in the main, though not without marked exceptions, to this effect.

Being thus democratic in origin, it is but natural that the systematic study and teaching of English have had to contend with the indifference or opposition of the Roman Church, the aristocracy, and the supporters of the ancient classics. Thus, notwithstanding the fact that a great body of mediæval English literature is monastic or ecclesiastical in character, we do not find that many distinguished Roman Catholic scholars have been engaged in editing or expounding it.<sup>1</sup> In like manner, the teaching of English prevails much more widely in America than in England, the contrast being no doubt in some measure due to the aristocratic traditions which cling to the ancient seats of learning in that country. And, with exceptions here and there, the representatives of the classics have ignored, depreciated, or opposed the progress and extension of English study. The reason is plain: these classes of persons have been the representatives of prescription and authority,

<sup>1</sup> An interesting exception in this country was Brother Azarias (Patrick F. Mullany, 1847-1893).



and have therefore felt in the advance of English the approaching triumph of a natural foe.

On the other hand, the allies of English have been democracy and individualism, the spirit of nationality, the methods of physical science, and the sensational and utilitarian philosophy, to which may be added the growing influence of woman, and, in part as the cause of this influence, the pervasive and vitalizing effect of essential Christianity.

To illustrate these points briefly. Locke, the founder of modern sensational philosophy, thus writes in his *Thoughts concerning Education* (1693): 'Since 't is English that an English gentleman will have constant use of, that is the language he should chiefly cultivate, and wherein most care should be taken to polish and perfect his style. . . . Whatever foreign language a young man meddles with—and the more he knows, the better—that which he should critically study, and labor to get a facility, clearness, and elegance to express himself in, should be his own.'

Franklin learned his English from the *Spectator*, and he was the founder and most persistent supporter, in the face of much discouragement, of an English high school in the city of Philadelphia. For this school he elaborated a plan of English teaching which can still be



pondered with profit by students of pedagogy. Jefferson, who espoused the cause of the people against the spirit of caste, established a chair of Anglo-Saxon in 1825 at his newly founded University of Virginia.

The names of these three men — Locke, Franklin, and Jefferson — who, in the three successive centuries following the rediscovery of the ancient tongue, zealously advocated the study of English, are deeply significant. They were apostles of a sensational philosophy, of physical science in its application to homely uses, of toleration, of the rights and needs of the common man. They represented prose, common sense, materialism, so that it is by the exquisite irony of overruling circumstance that they have aided in bringing poetry, religion, and philosophical idealisms home to the smug and benighted Philistine. For our schools teach Ruskin rather than Locke, Shakespeare rather than *Poor Richard's Almanac*, Burke rather than Jefferson; they speak, like Balaam, far other words than as they were commanded at the first.

This ennoblement and etherealization of the subject of English teaching, and to some extent of its method, is primarily due to two causes — the influence of Christianity, and the consequent influence of woman. To begin with the larger of these two factors: the belief in the value of



the individual is the basis of democracy, and this belief came into the world with Christianity. It was the Puritans who overthrew the despotism of the Stuarts, and it was their success that emboldened and informed the prophets of the French Revolution. Rousseau promulgated the gospel of individualism in a form adapted to his age and country, yet not more truly nor effectively than did Wesley in England; and Rousseau himself, however unwittingly or unwillingly, was but the mouthpiece of the Christian consciousness which for centuries had been protesting against the vassalage of man to any power lower than the divine. The return to nature, the return to poetry, was a return to the indefeasible instincts and needs of the individual human soul. The social contract was supposed to rest upon free consent, like the association of individuals in the primitive Christian church.

The lyric cry of Romanticism was an echo of the chants that resounded from the church and cloister of the Middle Ages. Like them, it was a passionate outpouring of the heart — in joy, in grief, in aspiration; and, like them, it uttered itself in freer and more spontaneous forms than those inherited from classical antiquity. At that cry the doors of an almost forgotten sepulchre opened, and there stumbled forth into the light a figure wrapped in cerements, at whose appear-



ance some stood aghast, while others exulted with the pulse of a new life. As the grave-clothes have been slowly unwrapped, we have beheld a visage marred more than any man, and its form more than the sons of men; but we have also seen a radiance streaming from the resuscitated members, and have felt a mysterious potency animating our own; for we have assisted at the resurrection of the buried Christianity of the Middle Ages, with its likeness to the Crucified, with its yearnings over the poor and them that have no helper, with its eager pressing on to the realization of the kingdom of God. Thus it has come to pass that the great literature of the nineteenth century is either Christian or humanitarian; and if humanitarian, then necessarily Christian, though it may be unconsciously or in its own despite. And what is true of the literature is true also, in its degree, of the ideals of our English teaching.

In this revolution woman has been at once a gainer and an actor. Whatever releases and strengthens the individual soul clothes her with might. Christianity, and the religion out of which Christianity sprang, first gave womanhood, as distinguished from single notable women, its potential dignity, influence, and fullest charm. What wonder that she has been instinctively repelled from those of the ancient classics,



and of their modern imitations, in which she has seen herself degraded and vilified? What wonder that she has been drawn toward a literature of sympathy and palpitant emotion — a literature which places the virgin and the mother upon the throne of earth and heaven, while it makes of woman a ministrant in the abode of poverty and at the couch of feebleness and pain? And so it results that much of the teaching of English is done by women, and it is they who strive forward, quite as eagerly as the men, to gain the advanced instruction in English of our higher institutions.

The deeper causes of the increasing study of English are thus seen to lie in the onward sweep of certain irresistible forces which are not yet spent, and which are likely to continue in operation for an indefinite period. The initial impulse came from that Protestantism which had been nourished in the lap of the Middle Ages; then utilitarianism spoke its word, and advocated a study which came home to the business and bosoms of all men; the spirit of nationality glorified the vernacular speech; the spirit of individuality emancipated men from bondage to pseudo-classicism; science inculcated fearlessness in exploration, and a recognition of value only where, and in so far as, value really existed; a reviving Christianity insisted on deference to



its own literary as well as ethical precepts; and at length woman had begun to assume the full royalty to which her claim had so long lain in abeyance, and to exercise it in behalf of those species and aspects of literature to which her nature inclines.

We may now turn to consider the specific progress effected in the last decade or so, though a fixed limit of time will not be easy to observe.

In the course of rather more than a generation in America, democracy has outgrown its institutions of higher learning. Not in the sense that it has appropriated and utilized all that its colleges and academies had to offer, and that, having transcended all this learning and culture, it has mildly requested more. No, it is rather in the material sense that it has outgrown them: it has filled to repletion the dormitories, classrooms, and laboratories, in at least one instance reciting in large tents pitched upon college grounds. The teeth of dragons had been scattered over a favorable soil, and immediately there sprang up impetuous hosts, rushing upon the domains of culture like the hordes of Attila upon the plains of fertile Italy. They were armed, so none could resist them; and they were rude, so that what they clamored for was less the garnered wisdom precious to the ripe scholar than such enginery of science as would



empower them to extort riches from the soil and the mine, or assist them in levying tribute upon the labor of others, together with such smattering of letters as would enable them to communicate with precision and brevity their wishes and commands, or would embellish the rare social hour with some suggestions of artistic refinement. Training in the older sense they cared not for. Those who devoted themselves to physical science endured so much of intellectual discipline as they considered indispensable for the attainment of their ends, but were impatient of more. Those who were less serious or less specific in their application were willing to practise the easier forms of writing, but in the pursuit of literature insisted upon being entertained, and then in being provided with abundance of the small coin of information and opinion, which they might utter in conversation or dispense in speech-making. If they were to have culture, it was culture made easy that they desired ; and, on the whole, they preferred to have it rather than otherwise. But to what purpose were they to turn their backs upon Greek and Latin, if they were to be required to pursue exact methods, and make solid acquisitions, in their native tongue ?

Here was the opportunity, the problem, and the pitfall of English. There were all the stu-



dents that the most grasping partisan of the subject could ask for. How should they be employed? How should they be satisfied? And how, if possible, should they be educated? The first two of these questions were more readily answered than the third.

The problem first beset the colleges, and especially the larger of them. It was they that were the first to be overcrowded, because of their prestige. The academies and high schools had enough to do with the preparation of their students in the stock subjects required for admission to college, in giving a little special attention to those who were to attend scientific schools, and in providing commercial courses; their turn was to come later. In the colleges there continued to be, as before, those who had inherited scholarly traditions, and who had come from refined homes — men who could be depended upon to profit by the best facilities provided for them. But side by side with these there were not only the children of poverty and obscurity — such there had always been, and from this class had arisen some of the most eminent of Americans — but a numerous body of students from families wealthy without inherited ideals, or prominent without distinction. These persons were ready to allege their riches as a warrior might allege his weapons; it was a reason for doing



nothing contrary to their inclination, and especially for nonchalant perseverance in the crudities of Philistinism.

Two possibilities presented themselves as contributory to the solution of the overwhelming problem. Training implied small classes; so training was not to be thought of. What, then, could be done with students in large masses? They could have frequent practice in writing about subjects with which they were presumably already conversant; and they could listen to lectures on English literature. In the one way, they could, if not form a style, at least learn to avoid the most vulgar errors; in the other, they could acquire a tincture of information concerning authors and their works, and learn to speak with decision about books which they perhaps had never read, and on which they had certainly never reflected.

In the smaller colleges matters were not so bad, at least as respects the size of the classes. There was therefore an opportunity to do good teaching, and in many instances good teaching was done. But two forces militated against excellence. The one was the influence of the larger colleges, exerted through their graduates and through public discussion; and this, as we have seen, was unavoidably in the direction of superficiality. The other was the uncertainty respect-



ing the best methods of instruction, due in part to the recent enrolment of English among the favored topics of the curriculum, in part to the variety of related subjects which might be comprehended under the term, and in part to the peculiar nature of English itself. To some it was clear that, since English was a language like Latin or Greek, with words and syntax, it could be taught like Latin or Greek, largely through etymological and grammatical exercitations or notes, with some assistance from the explanation of historical allusions and the citation of parallel passages. To others it was equally clear that, since English was our native tongue, it stood in no need of learned commentary, and that nothing was necessary but to read it—read it rapidly, extensively, and with interest. Some, who had studied in Germany, were for carrying every word back to what they called Anglo-Saxon; others had not so much as heard whether there were any Anglo-Saxon, but at all events were positive that it had no connection with modern English. Some loved poetry and æsthetics, and would none of Dryasdust ‘philology;’ others believed in applying the scientific method to literature, and eschewing impressionism and the musical glasses. All of us, I suppose, have done the best we knew how; it has not been our fault if we have insisted upon our personal



predilections, or taken up with other people's fads; the truth of it is that while Greek and Latin were taught according to a system and a method, good or bad, we had none upon which we were agreed, and, from the very nature of the case, could have none.

Among the rhetorical teachers it was nearly or quite as bad as among the professors of literature. There were those who depended upon negative precepts — 'Don't' writ large over many things reprehensible according to literary convention or the individual preceptor; those whose main reliance was upon constant practice in writing, with a minimum of precept; those who followed the rhetoric of the eighteenth century, rewritten to date at the behest of enterprising publishers; and those who believed that students would never mend till the English they spoke and wrote was regarded as the common concern of all departments of instruction, and not relegated to one or a very few instructors, who in this way were made the scapegoats or whipping-boys not only for the sins of the whole student body, but also for the negligence of their other teachers. Here, again, we may not censure, and must certainly find much to admire. But if personal initiative is pardonable — nay, even praiseworthy — in those who have to sustain the first onset of an unexpected attack, and if we marvel at the pluck



with which one clubs his weapon and another flings a stone, it is not therefore to be doubted that the manual of arms is, on the whole, an excellent book and worthy to be studied, nor that conduct and harmony of action are what an army chiefly needs.

While the colleges were thus struggling with their difficulties, how was it faring with the schools? In the lower schools training had been largely abandoned. 'Reading without tears' was the watchword. The pupil must at all hazards be kept 'interested'; that is to say, amused and distracted. 'Language-lessons' took the place of grammar, and the 'word-method' of spelling. Spelling and grammar, therefore, became as obsolete as the mediæval *trivium* and *quadrivium*, and were reckoned among the lost arts. Instead of a few things well learned, there were many things badly taught. Now to know many things badly has from of old been regarded as a poor equipment for facing the stern 'Stand and deliver!' of life.

It was thus the high school and the academy that were to be caught between the upper and the nether millstone. For the colleges, finding an illiteracy confirmed by the habits of half a generation too deeply rooted to be eradicated within a reasonable time, at least with the means at their disposal, began to consider whether this



inveteracy were not, on the whole, a thing to be deplored ; and eventually opined that it was. They then began to frame entrance requirements in English, designed to remove the more ignominious phases of this illiteracy before college years, either through some acquaintance with English literature, or through practice in writing, or both. The requirements were of varying degrees of severity ; but that mattered little, since they were seldom enforced, and never with the rigor which a decent regard to the opinions of enlightened humanity would have exacted. When the high schools were remonstrated with for the ignorance and slovenliness which they permitted, they alleged the prescriptive requirements of the colleges on the one hand, and on the other the inexorable demands of a public which expected them to teach bookkeeping, physics, chemistry, physiology, botany, geology, civics, political economy, manual training, domestic economy — all the ‘preparation for actual life.’ How, then, could they take up English in addition ? ‘English, forsooth !—but yet if our pupils are minded to read certain books at home, and report the fact at school, we will see what can be done. Still, it is a crying injustice that we should be expected to retrieve all the deficiencies remaining through the negligence or incapacity of the lower schools.’

The pressure thus exerted by the colleges



upon the preparatory schools has in many instances been transmitted by them to the grammar schools, with the result that the worst evils are in course of being remedied; and certain high schools have courses in English extending over four years, and with four or five exercises a week, conducted by enthusiastic, winning, and competent teachers. Unfortunately, there is a premature movement on the part of a few high schools to emancipate themselves from all dependence upon college requirements — or, as their representatives would say, an unreasonable obstinacy on the part of the colleges in holding to their requirements — a movement which, unless carefully watched, will go far to nullify the progress which has been made, since it is only through the harmonious coöperation of all parts of our educational system that the indispensable results can be attained.

Though there is still much to be desired, there is considerable ground for encouragement. A few of the gains of recent years may be briefly enumerated.

Through the agency of various bodies, chief of which is perhaps the Conference on Uniform Entrance Requirements in English, the chasm which yawned between the colleges and the preparatory schools is in process of being bridged over. This Conference, composed of representa-



tives from all sections of the country east of the Rocky Mountains — California has its own excellent system of local coöperation — and from colleges and preparatory schools alike, has set up a standard not merely of college requirements, but also of high school attainment, which is fairly satisfactory to the whole country; thus measurably harmonizing the views of both classes of institutions, as well as of the East, the West, and the South. But in this effort it has not stood alone. The National Educational Association and its committee of ten; the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools of the Middle States and Maryland; the Commission of Colleges in New England; the New England Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools; the North Central Association of Teachers of English; the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools of the Southern States; the Regents of the State of New York; and the Schoolmasters' Association of New York City — these, and other similar bodies, besides numerous individuals whose names it would be invidious to mention, have contributed to the same end.

With a better understanding of what the secondary schools are expected to accomplish, there has come more pride in the work; a spirit of emulation among the more aspiring of the



schools ; a growing sense of professionalism among the teachers of English ; and a demand for special instruction, suited to the needs of such teachers, on the part of the larger colleges and universities. In many cases, as already observed, excellent courses of instruction have been formulated within the individual school, or by bodies like the Connecticut Association of Classical and High School Teachers ; and in some schools such programs are in successful operation. Then, too, rival publishing houses, finding that it would be remunerative to focus their attention upon the books set for the entrance examinations, have competed with one another in the issue of well-edited and attractive texts. The interest in school-directed home reading is sure to follow ; canny publishers will reap a harvest, and the public will be immensely benefited.

With all allowance for deficiencies and blunders, then, we may fairly say that these results have been accomplished. The pride and interest of Americans in England's literature and that of our own country ; the craving for culture in a form which promises so much return for so little expenditure of effort ; the admiration for our speech, because it is our own, because of its wide diffusion and sway, and because of the great works by which it has been illustrated ; and the need and desire to employ the language as a



means of communication, of persuasion, and of artistic achievement — these, seconded by the whole democratic and scientific trend of the century, by the interest of other races in their own vernaculars, and by the necessity of unifying our heterogeneous population on the basis of a common speech and common sentiments, have not only multiplied magazines and newspapers, and cheapened books, but have introduced courses in English into schools and colleges of every grade, and taxed the energies and resources of every teacher of the subject. Beginning sporadically, and at first proceeding unevenly, the movement, as it has gathered volume, has tended to absorb the currents of individual opinion, and to render them all unconsciously tributary to a distant and perhaps as yet dimly perceived end. From the chaos and welter of divergent opinion, certain conclusions have at least so far emerged that we can now fairly say what the country in general seeks as a requisite in English for admission to college. This requirement is helping to fix and direct the courses in English of the secondary schools; and these, in turn, cannot fail to exercise a profound influence upon the ideals and efforts of the grammar and primary schools. In some degree, this establishment of a common standard of entrance proficiency in English tends to unify the college work, in so



far as it eliminates certain tasks from the college curriculum which have hitherto found a place there because it was necessary that they should be done somewhere. Further progress in the organization of college teaching is to be expected through reflection upon the failures due to misdirected endeavor; through the natural efforts of rival institutions to equal or transcend one another's successes; through the lessons taught by scientific pedagogy; and especially, it may be, from graduate study of the subject, leading to wider views and more philosophical generalizations.

It being assumed that important changes in the conception of English teaching are now in progress, and that we may confidently look for a more general agreement with respect to the precise nature of its purposes and processes, we may ask ourselves whether current practice and discussions will enable us to forecast what the next steps will be, and how far they will leave us short of a reasonable goal. In attempting to find an answer, we must bear in mind that if there are definable currents, there are also counter-currents; and that what is true of one institution or one section of the country is not necessarily true, at the same moment, somewhere else. Were there not this confusion, and even apparent contrariety of effort, it would be far



easier to outline the situation ; but this condition would imply that the gain had been achieved, and that henceforth we were to be content. Now it is the sense of unrealized possibilities, and of the field that they offer to hope and young ambition, for which the teacher of English is most profoundly grateful, and which at times inspires him with the sentiments of a Columbus or a Magellan, if not of a Cortez or an Alexander.

If we look at the situation largely, this, I think, may fairly be said at the moment : that the emphasis is upon quantity rather than quality, upon phenomena rather than principles, upon practice rather than theory, or upon the science rather than the philosophy of the subject. In this respect English does not stand absolutely alone, but the tendency is here more accentuated because English is such a late comer into the sisterhood of disciplines, and has yet so much to learn. Colleges pride themselves on the number of their English courses, their extent and their variety ; we have had the daily theme, perhaps with the addition of the weekly, the bi-weekly, or the monthly essay ; grammar has been extensively repudiated ; and the 'old rhetoric,' which I take to be a statement of principles with the necessary illustrations, has been supplanted by a newer rhetoric, which tends, at least in one of its phases, to become a collection of illustra-



tive excerpts from literature, with a minimum of elucidative theory.

In some quarters, the spirit of science, cautious and inductive, is supplanting an older cocksure dogmatism. The processes of the investigator's laboratory are attempted in the class-room. The student is brought face to face with facts, and encouraged to draw his own inferences. He then becomes conscious of a world of phenomena which he cannot hope to master in a limited time, but which is infinitely attractive by reason of its complexity and vitality. Who would not hesitate to criticize a mode of teaching which is the scholar's mode of learning? The method of science, from the days of Bacon onward, has given man an ever increasing power over nature; why should it not be applicable to language and literature, and if adopted in the study, why should it not be practicable in the school? It is; it must be. And yet we hesitate to stop with a simple assent. Science is content with advances which may be slow as the unspeeding precession of the equinoxes, if only they be sure; while to the individual student, whether life be short or not, pupilage needs must be. Moreover, literature belongs to the sphere of the emotions and the will, at least as much as to that of the pure intellect. And again, the novice may be in a position to draw proximate inferences, while



incapable of forming by himself those ultimate conceptions which are regulative of the whole nature, and which are as readily attained through the medium of literature as through any branch of secular study. Besides, it is a fact that the student hungers for the voice of authority ; he can repose only in certitude — a certitude which he finds it impracticable to attain by his own efforts, yet without which he cannot act with the freedom and power which the possession of truth alone confers. In other words, the necessary complement of science is philosophy. Philosophy recognizes only a few great constitutive principles, which it attains by including many phenomena under one law, and many subordinate laws under one more comprehensive. With a philosophy of literature one may approximately comprehend its great manifestations ; with the science alone one has the pleasure of always learning, but the disadvantage of never being able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

The still easier way — to pursue only infinite and uncoördinated, or at best loosely coördinated detail — is to sacrifice strength, grasp, direction, to the charm of waywardness, the delight of endless straying. Yet it must be confessed that to many minds the delight of endless straying is unconquerable. They love variety and easy appreciation ; they care not for a perception of



unity and law which must be bought with arduous labor. The appeal of literature to them is, 'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may.' And are they to be blamed for yielding to the seductive proffer?

These considerations lead us to what is perhaps the fundamental problem in the teaching of English literature — how to combine discipline with delight. Given a certain temperament in the speaker, and it is easy to interest or amuse classes or audiences with English literature. It is not so easy for persons of the like temperament, or of any temperament whatever, to train others, or themselves, by means of English literature. A certain training is always secured in the acquisition of a foreign or ancient language. This, it is sometimes said, must be missed by the student of his own: his memory and judgment are not exercised in the same way, and he is not called upon to make the effort necessary for comprehending alien modes of thought. Must English literature, then, leave people where it finds them, save for the pleasure it affords, the fund of information it yields, and a certain vague and unconscious effect in the refinement of taste? There are always those who will reply: 'What more could you ask? Is not this enough?' There are never lacking those who say: 'English literature cannot be taught. The art of writing



cannot be taught. English literature can be read, and grammar can be taught. All subjects whatever can be talked about, facts can be memorized, examinations can be held, but literature and the art of writing cannot be taught.'

Perhaps the dispute is one about words. Suppose we change the terms, and ask, not whether literature can be taught, but whether people can be taught by means of literature. Antiquity evidently thought so. Let us hear the testimony of Professor Jebb:<sup>1</sup> 'The study of the poets in schools is described in Plato's *Protagoras*. . . . The purpose was not only to form the boy's literary taste, or to give him the traditional lore; it was especially a moral purpose, having regard to the precepts in the poets, and to the praises of great men of old — "in order that the boy may emulate their examples, and may strive to become such as they." From this point of view, Homer was regarded as the best and greatest of educators. In Xenophon's *Symposium* one of the guests says: "My father, anxious that I should become a good man, made me learn all the poems of Homer; and now I could say the whole *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by heart." . . . Especially, as Isocrates says, Homer was looked upon as the embodiment of national Hellenic sentiment. No one else was so well fitted to keep the

<sup>1</sup> *Homer*, p. 81.



edge of Hellenic feeling keen and bright against the barbarian.'

This is instructive in more than one way. Note (1) that it is poetry that is studied; (2) that the study is intimate and prolonged; (3) that it does not range over a boundless field; (4) that it has a direct and practical bearing upon life; (5) that it is a study of character and sentiments, not primarily of words and technique. And not otherwise is Horace's conception of the usefulness of Homer in the Second Epistle of the First Book, or Plutarch's in his treatise on *How a Young Man should study Literature*.<sup>1</sup>

Turning from antiquity to modern times, we may ask ourselves what Milton—one of the wisest men who have ever written on the training of youth—thought about education as sought through the recorded speech of the past. Remember that he wrote a Latin grammar, and made extensive collections for a Latin dictionary, and then listen to his assertion in the treatise *On Education*: 'Though a linguist should pride himself to have all the tongues that Babel cleft the world into, yet if he have not studied the solid things in them, as well as the words and lexicons, he were nothing so much to be esteemed a learned man as any yeoman or tradesman com-

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Padelford's translation (*Yale Studies in English* XV), pp. 61 ff.



petently wise in his mother dialect only.' On the premature practice of composition he has to observe: 'And that which casts our proficiency therein so much behind' — he is speaking of Latin and Greek, but he would have held the same respecting English — 'is our time lost, . . . partly in a preposterous exaction, forcing the empty wits of children to compose themes, verses, and orations, which are the acts of ripest judgment, and the final work of a head filled by long reading and observing with elegant maxims and copious invention. These are not matters to be wrung from poor striplings, like blood out of the nose, or the plucking of untimely fruit.'

Leaving the criticism of existing practices, Milton next proceeds to develop his own plan. He resumes: 'For their studies, first they should begin with the chief and necessary rules of some good grammar; . . . and while this is doing, their speech is to be fashioned to a distinct and clear pronunciation, as near as may be to the Italian, especially in the vowels.' When it comes to their reading, he is of opinion that 'the main skill and groundwork will be to temper them such lectures and explanations, upon every opportunity, as may lead and draw them in willing obedience, inflamed with the study of learning and the admiration of virtue, stirred up with high hopes of living to be brave men and worthy patriots, dear



to God and famous to all ages.' After much time spent upon the useful arts and the best authors, he would introduce his pupils to logic and the theory of poetry. 'This,' he says, 'would make them soon perceive . . . what religious, what glorious and magnificent use might be made of poetry, both in divine and human things.' And here comes the conclusion of the whole matter, so far as the practice of writing is concerned: 'From hence, and not till now, will be the right season of forming them to be able writers and composers in every excellent matter, when they shall be thus fraught with an universal insight into things.'

Such was not only Milton's theory, but such had already been his practice. As is well known, he spent five years at Horton, after leaving the university, in the perusal of the classics. And what was the effect of this reading upon Milton as man and as poet? I will take the answer from a contemporary Miltonic scholar:<sup>1</sup> 'To Milton an extension of his reading was an extension of his own life, with all its experience, sympathies, and understanding, into the life and times of which he read. . . . It is a commonplace that travel enlarges a man's nature. For the high and sensitive mind books do the same, and in the case

<sup>1</sup> Osgood, *The Classical Mythology of Milton's English Poems*, p. xliii.



of Milton the quality of wide range in his poetic utterance was a direct consequence of the range of his own mind, which his reading had done much to extend.' In another place the same writer says:<sup>1</sup> 'In attempting to explain Milton's power over his material, one word suggests itself. . . . It is his clearness of vision. With the detailed scrutiny of the Renaissance added to the exalted faith of the Middle Ages and the clearness and intellectuality of true classicism, he looked upon the world with a more perfect comprehension of its meaning and of the right purpose in life. Throughout his poems there is passionate but steady contemplation of things which men of his time either failed to see, or saw but faintly and apart from life itself. They are the eternal truths which lie around and above this life, and through which all things act in coöperation, and not in contradiction, as it appears to the worldly man.'

Here, then, we come back to our theme. Whether or not literature can be taught, at least the lesson of it can be learned. It was learned by Dante, sitting at the feet of Virgil, and Aristotle, and the authors of Scripture; by Chaucer, sitting at the feet of Ovid, and Petrarch, and Guillaume de Lorris; by Spenser, sitting at the feet of Chaucer and Tasso; by

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. lxviii.



Burke, sitting at the feet of Cicero and Milton; by Tennyson, sitting at the feet of Homer, and Virgil, and Dante, and Keats, and Wordsworth. The great learners always learn meanings and values. Incidentally, they may learn facts and phrases and artifices; they may learn to imitate; they may learn to appropriate; they may even learn to surpass; but the supreme thing they learn is meanings and values — the meanings of life, the relative values of the various possibilities that life offers. These things literature can teach us, if we will learn; and these things it is important that we, and our children, should know. The great authors must know them; not alone the authors of permanent literature, but the authors of permanent freedom, permanent empire, permanent civilization. Authors, and all artists, are shapers; and in America every one is called upon to be a shaper — to shape his own destiny, the destiny of his country, the destiny, in some sense, of the world. If he does not know the meanings and values of things, what shapes will he produce? And in all our education, what shall teach him these meanings and values, if not literature?

It has been pertinently asked: ‘Why has all this teaching of English, in the last twenty years, produced so little good literature? What is there to show for all the effort, for all the hue



and cry? Men like Lowell, bred up in the ancient classics, and advocating them to the end, are among the foremost in American letters. Their successors, fed, without labor of their own, on the accumulated stores of England and America — where are they? who are they? what have they produced?’ Well, perhaps the fault is not alone in the teaching of English. The matter is by no means so simple as that. But certainly the supreme justification for devoting so much space to the subject of English would be found in the production of authors, the production of men, the production of statesmen and patriots, who should equal — no, that would not be sufficient; who should surpass — the authors, the men, the statesmen, and the patriots reared under the tutelage of the ancient classics and the Bible. We have all the advantage, for we have the ancient classics and the Bible too, in addition to the treasures of our own literature. The English teacher may teach Plato and Dante, Goethe and Molière, if he so choose, as well as Shakespeare and Browning. Nay, if he is to teach meanings and values, he must teach them, at least by implication; for his own sense of meanings and values will be most imperfect if he do not himself know the best literature of all the world, and constantly use it as the touchstone by which to try the authors with whom he is dealing.



Fortunately, there are signs which point that safe and happy way. The validity of rhetorical practice and precept is being tested by an examination of the underlying psychology. Here and there classes in poetical theory are endeavoring to ascertain what qualities insure the permanence and enduring charm of literature. Scholarship in English, through the agency of our better graduate schools, is deepening as well as widening, is growing more refined and less mechanical. There is hope that the quantitative test will be gradually supplanted by the qualitative — that we shall forget to ask, ‘How much?’ and begin to ask, ‘How well?’ But to attain this result implies something more than harmonious effort from the primary school to the university; it implies that in every grade the attention shall be steadfastly fixed, not upon the demands of the next higher grade, but upon the best things — the things eternally best in their own nature, the things which most surely conduce to the fullness and perfection of individual and national life.



### III

## THE RELATION OF WORDS TO LITERATURE







## THE RELATION OF WORDS TO LITERATURE<sup>1</sup>

. . . WE are told of Cuvier that, from a single bone of a fossil animal, he could, whether or not he had studied its anatomy previously, construct its entire skeleton. Have we not profound respect for the Greek archæologist who can, from a few broken capitals and ruined bases, reconstruct a beautiful temple? Do we not admire the sureness of knowledge which enables one to eke out the missing parts of an ancient statue? What skill is frequently displayed by palæographers in supplying letters, whole words, and sometimes even several words of a mutilated inscription! In a note to Matthew Arnold's essay on Celtic literature, Lord Strangford shows how, by similar study, the forms of a prehistoric language can be ascertained with certainty. He says: 'By true inductive research, based on an accurate comparison of such forms of Celtic speech, oral and recorded, as we now possess, modern philology has, in so far as was possible, succeeded in

<sup>1</sup> From an address delivered at Vassar College, February 19, 1906.



restoring certain forms of the parent speech, and in so doing has achieved not the least striking of its many triumphs ; for these very forms, thus restored, have since been verified past all cavil by their actual discovery in the old Gaulish inscriptions recently come to light.'

Where the laws of nature have been in operation, as in the case of the bony structure of an animal, and to some extent in the form of a language, such reconstructions, though always admirable, are perhaps not precisely wonderful. Where human choice or will enters, as in the productions of architecture and sculpture, or in lapidary inscriptions, it might be supposed that they would introduce an element of caprice, and therefore of uncertainty ; yet we know how frequently, and with how much sureness, the missing parts are divined. This must be, then, because such works of art, too, have a certain organic character, because they cohere almost as do the members of an animal. A squirrel with horns, or a sheep with a trunk like an elephant — who would think of postulating such monstrosities ? Now this sense of the monstrous, and hence of the impossible, must grow, and become more and more keen, in every capable person who devotes himself to intensive study in any department. Such a one will not look for the chiaroscuro of Rembrandt in a fresco by Giotto, nor for the



dreamy languors of a modern waltz in a fugue or chorale by Bach.

In the field of literary investigation, reputations are now and again won, almost over night, by the application of such principles. Some thirty years ago, a student of the Germanic languages, reading over an Old English poem of considerable length, called the *Genesis*, was struck by the fact that five or six hundred lines, in the heart of the poem, seemed to differ in various respects from the lines which preceded and followed. Pursuing his inquiry further, and comparing the forms of these lines with those of a kindred language, he came to the conclusion that this section, which had always been supposed to be original Old English, had been in fact translated from Old Saxon, the continental Germanic tongue referred to above, and was therefore led to believe in the existence of an Old Saxon poem on this subject of *Genesis*, though he was obliged to confess that he had found no other trace of its existence. Some twenty years after, another scholar, at work in the Vatican Library, which had only recently rendered its treasures more accessible, discovered a fragment of the missing Old Saxon *Genesis*, of which probably no one had read a line for a thousand years. Yet such had been the faith of competent scholars in Sievers' processes that no



one was surprised when the missing manuscript swam into sight, any more than astronomers were amazed when the telescope pointed to the quarter of the heavens indicated by Adams and Leverrier, and revealed the planet Neptune, which no human eye till then had ever seen. Professor Sievers might have read histories of Old English literature, and essays on it, for decades; he might have read this poem in a casual way a score of times, just as Adams and Leverrier might have rushed about the sky with their telescopes for unnumbered nights, without anything to reward their diligence; but by the intensive methods they actually employed, Sievers became famous at twenty-five, and Adams immortalized himself at twenty-seven.

A little reflection will show that intensive study is compatible with extensive, and, in fact, is impossible without it. Adams and Leverrier could not hope to discover Neptune save through an acquaintance with the whole planetary system. If Sievers had known no other language than Old English, it would have been to comparatively little purpose that he studied the *Genesis*. The person who investigates Milton line by line, and word by word, must know more than a little of the ancient poets, of Spenser and of Shakespeare, if his intensive study is to yield him the richest returns.



Nothing will sooner convince one of the necessity for wide knowledge of his chosen subject than an attempt to master some small corner of it. Not long ago an archæologist was studying the representations of the god Pan in sculpture and the allied arts. Side by side with the numerous figures of a bearded and goat-footed deity, with prominent horns, he came upon some of quite a different type, in which the god was represented as a beardless youth, with merely incipient horns half-hidden by his clustering hair, and with no other sign of animality about him. How was this to be explained? Had our intensive student been narrow in his outlook and knowledge, he must have rested in a statement of this discrepancy. Being such as he was, however, he had no difficulty in showing that the youthful type was merely a slight modification of a famous statue by the sculptor Polycletus, called the Doryphoros, or spear-bearer. Provided with inconspicuous horns, and with a sheep-hook instead of a spear, this figure was readily transformed into a statue highly acceptable to those worshipers of Pan who demanded more beauty or dignity in the semblance of their deity than figures of the usual type possessed. Whenever a new statue, or fragment of a statue, is discovered in Greece, professional students are at once ready to draw upon all extant knowledge of the subject



in order to identify the personage depicted, and to assign the marble or bronze to its epoch, its school, or its individual creator.

Let me now attempt to illustrate the intensive study of literature by an example taken from so well-known a poet as Tennyson. The poem I have selected is already comparatively short, but I shall still further limit myself, and examine only a small portion of it; and even this I shall not attempt to study as minutely as might be necessary if one were intent on making discoveries concerning a poem whose relations were otherwise unknown. As I shall need, however, to touch upon what Matthew Arnold has called natural magic, and the peculiar susceptibility to it shown by the Celtic genius, I must first direct your attention to one or two sentences from the essay on Celtic literature in which he deals with that phase of the subject. Speaking of the Celt, he says (p. 82): 'His sensibility gives him a peculiarly near and intimate feeling of nature and the life of nature; here, too, he seems in a special way attracted by the secret before him, the secret of natural beauty and natural magic, and to be close to it, to half-divine it.' He finds the Celtic quality in Reynolds and Turner as painters (p. 93). 'They succeed,' says he, 'in magic, in beauty, in grace, in expressing almost the inexpressible. Here is the charm of



Reynolds' children and Turner's seas; the impulse to express the inexpressible carries Turner so far that at last it carries him away.' ♡

Turning to the poem we have selected, Tennyson's *Merlin and The Gleam*, we find that it was written in his late maturity, three years before his death, and when he was eighty years old. He had long been familiar with the Celtic legends concerning Arthur, and the *Idylls of the King* are touched with not a little of Celtic imaginativeness. In Hallam Tennyson's *Memoir* his father is made to say: 'In the story of *Merlin and Nimue* I have read that Nimue means the Gleam — which signifies in my poem the higher poetic 'imagination.' With the very title of the poem thus coming from a Celtic source, it would not be surprising if the poem itself were suffused with Celtic magic. If Tennyson were to suffuse it with magic, and especially with Celtic magic, what words would he be likely to make use of to effect his purpose? Evidently he would not use any chance words that he might happen to recall, but would make a definite selection of such as would be full of the requisite connotations.

Now let us see what he has done. The poem contains nine stanzas. Every stanza ends with the words, 'The Gleam;' that is to say, the theme — the higher poetic imagination in its relation to the poet — recurs in the manner of a



refrain. It is a light — a fugitive, a traveling, an advancing light — which the poet is to follow throughout his poem, as throughout his life. By this means he will obtain movement — movement which he will express by numerous verbs — movement, and occasional rest, and movement again, movement prolonged, as it were, beyond the end of his poem, and even of his life. Movement, and a light — a light appearing not only for itself, but also for the illumination which it may shed upon objects exposed to it. The movement gives unity to the poem: we follow the gleam in its wanderings until it disappears beyond the poem's verge, and then the poem ceases.

Now what sort of word is needed to denote this light? Shall it be 'ray' — or 'beam' — or 'glow' — or 'glint' — or 'spark' — or 'flash' — or 'blaze' — or 'flame' — or 'sheen' — or 'splendor'? We might discuss each of these, and find reasons for rejecting them all. Some of the reasons for selecting 'gleam' may be discovered in Tennyson's own use of the word as noun and verb. 'Gleam,' with him, may suggest cold light or warm light. Perhaps it is rather cold than warm in *The Miller's Daughter* (115, 116):

The white chalk-quarry from the hill  
Gleamed to the flying moon by fits.

Here we are made to associate the word with alternate appearance and disappearance.



We cannot doubt which is meant in the line from *The Two Voices* (182):

Beyond the polar gleam forlorn.

In *Merlin and Vivien* (223):

Like fallows in the windy gleams of March.

In *Locksley Hall* (4) we have something forbidding:

Dreary gleams about the moorland flying over Locksley Hall.

On the other hand, in addressing Margaret, the poet says:

Lulled echoes of laborious day

Come to you, gleams of mellow light

Float by you on the verge of night.

But the quality which we should chiefly expect to find in the poem before us occurs in a much earlier poem, *The Two Voices* (380):

Moreover, something is or seems

That touches me with mystic gleams,

Like glimpses of forgotten dreams.

The thought of our poem, as well as this word, Tennyson might have derived from Wordsworth's lines on Peele Castle — the familiar lines:

— And add the gleam,

The light that never was on sea or land,

The consecration, and the poet's dream.

As early as the Elizabethan period the word was dowered with mystical associations, or at



least associations of high poetical beauty, such as Matthew Arnold might call Celtic. The seventeenth century had but just begun when Marston wrote (*Antonio and Mellida*, Act 3):

Is not yon gleam the shuddering morn that flakes  
With silver tincture the east verge of heaven ?

Thus we see that Tennyson had already invested the word with the necessary atmosphere in the earlier part of his life, that he had possibly taken it over from Wordsworth in just the sense needed here, and that its poetic possibilities had been discovered when Shakespeare was in mid career. Could one ask a more appropriate history in the case of a word which was to dominate such a poem? Perhaps not; but we have not yet exhausted its appropriateness. The English language does not yield up its riches so easily; we must dig for them, as for hid treasures.<sup>1</sup>

If we revert to the oldest period of English, we shall find, in the first place, that 'gleam' has always been a poetic word. In Old English poetry it is used some five times — once as a

<sup>1</sup> Joubert says: 'Like the fields, languages are enriched by digging; to make them fruitful, when they are no longer virgin soil, we must dig deep.' And again: 'In literature it is well for the writer to go back to the sources of a language, because he thus opposes antiquity to fashion; and besides, when a man discovers in his native tongue that touch of unfamiliarity which stimulates and awakens the taste, he speaks it better, and with more pleasure.'



synonym for the sun, once of the brightness of the sun as it causes vegetation to revive in spring, once of the glorious beauty of the earth, once of a heavenly light appearing in the darkness of night, and once of the radiance of beautiful maidenhood.<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding the effulgence which it originally denoted, the word is somewhat remotely akin to *glimmer* and *glimpse*. We now begin to see why it is so marvelously adapted to our poem. When the lexicographer defines the word, he does so in the following terms: 'In early use, a brilliant light (e. g. of the sun). In mod. use, a subdued or transient appearance of light, emitted or reflected.' The poet, then, has warrant in the history of the word for increasing or diminishing the light it designates. In this respect its meaning has not been fixed, any more than in the steadiness of the shining. Tennyson's

Dreary gleams about the moorland flying over Locksley  
Hall

<sup>1</sup> It is of course not necessary to assume that Tennyson was familiar with the earliest history of the word; it is sufficient to realize that it had come down to him from a remote antiquity invested with poetic associations, some constant, and some gradually acquired, of which he could avail himself on occasion. The picture mellowed by centuries has richer and deeper tones than the same picture when it left the painter's hand; but the later effects repose upon the earlier, and are evolved out of them.



suggests fitfulness or intermittence. But when, in *The Two Voices* (212), the poet speaks of those who

Saw distant gates of Eden gleam,

the light implied is not necessarily unsteady, nor does it seem to me to be so in Wordsworth's

— gleam,

The light that never was on sea or land.

Suppose we compare it in these respects with *glow*, as in Milton's

— Now glowed the firmament

With living sapphires,

or in Tennyson's reference to the planet Mars (*Maud* 3. 6. 14) :

As he glowed like a ruddy shield on the Lion's breast.

Is *glow* capable of such range — intensity and fitfulness both considered? Or, not to neglect other words beginning with *gl*, let us take *glance*, as in *The Brook* :

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance.

Is its range any wider? Or that of *glitter*, or *glimpse*, or *glimmer*? *Glitter*, like *glimmer*, belongs to those frequentative formations in *-er* which, by the very law of their constitution, originally denote or imply unsteadiness. Kingsley has (*Misc.* 2. 17) : 'As their wings glittered in the light, they looked like flakes of snow.' Ten-



nyson thus uses *glimmer* of a reflection (*Edwin Morris* 135):

Her taper glimmered in the lake below.

And it hardly needs saying that *glimpse* implies a similar unsteadiness, or rather fitfulness, as with reference to the ghost of Hamlet’s father, who

Revisits thus the glimpses of the moon.

And now, if we return to our poem, we shall see how Tennyson can use the kinship of two words, the range of meaning in the one, and the comparative fixity of the other, in stanza 6:

For out of the darkness  
 Silent and slowly  
 The Gleam, that had waned to a wintry glimmer  
 On icy fallow  
 And faded forest,  
 Drew to the valley  
 Named of the shadow,  
 And slowly brightening  
 Out of the glimmer,  
 And slowly moving again to a melody  
 Yearningly tender,  
 Fell on the shadow,  
 No longer a shadow,  
 But clothed with The Gleam.

If we reflect that this is the darkest and most horrible of all shadows, the shadow of death, we shall feel the expansiveness, the latent potencies



of this Gleam, which erstwhile 'had waned to a wintry glimmer,' and shall find ourselves back again with the solar effulgence recognized in Old English, the 'splendor in the grass,' the 'glory in the flower,' that victorious principle of life and beauty which triumphs over ugliness and triumphs over death.

A while ago I was speaking of the Celtic tone of this poem. I might have spoken of a certain wistfulness and unrest, a dissatisfaction with the actual, an unworldliness, almost an unearthliness, in it. I might have found in it suggestions of that Celtic land of Brittany on which a French lecturer has been so eloquently discoursing in this country of late, or of that Celtic land of Lyonesse by the Cornish sea, where, as the novice informs Guinevere, her father, as he rode,

— An hour or maybe twain

After the sunset, down the coast, he heard  
 Strange music, and he paused, and turning — there,  
 All down the lonely coast of Lyonesse,  
 Each with a beacon-star upon his head,  
 And with a wild sea-light about his feet,  
 He saw them — headland after headland flame  
 Far on into the rich heart of the west;  
 And in the light the white mermaiden swam,  
 And strong man-breasted things stood from the sea,  
 And sent a deep sea-voice thro' all the land,  
 To which the little elves of chasm and cleft  
 Made answer, sounding like a distant horn.



And yet, though I have insisted on the Celticism present, and perhaps dominant, in the poem, it will not have escaped your notice that I have been dwelling at considerable length on a word — the word *gleam* — which is not Celtic at all, but Germanic, a word as Anglo-Saxon as Anglo-Saxon can be. What is to be said under these circumstances? Am I not convicted of a glaring *non sequitur*? Yes, unless the *non sequitur* be Tennyson's. The truth is, for one thing, that the number of demonstrably Celtic words in English is very small, so that the poet could not convey Celtic feeling by this agency, if he would. And then has not the example of 'gleam' shown us that a word belonging to a race alien and hateful to the Celt, a race which seemed to him uncouth, barbarous, even stupid, may yet serve admirably to convey Celtic sentiment?

This principle may be illustrated from the whole poem. In the first stanza, of ten lines and thirty-five words (including repetitions), there are two Latin words, both in the first line, one from Old Norse, *die*, one from Old Persian, *magician*, and all the rest pure English, or Anglo-Saxon. The Old Persian word, if it be really such, is one of might and mystery. An ancient writer says:<sup>1</sup> 'Among the Persians they who are wise respecting the deity, and are his servants, are called

<sup>1</sup> Porphyry, *De Abstin.* 4. 16.



magi.' There is considerable evidence to show that both name and office of these magi were originally Babylonian. Now what was magic, among what nations was it practised, what was it supposed to accomplish, what rites did it employ? Was there any truth in it? How long did it persist? When did it die out? These questions may suggest how little we know about the word without deeper study. What should we think about the Magi who came to worship Christ? Where did they come from, and why did they come? Were their pursuits such as should deserve our respect? In Tennyson's *Coming of Arthur*, we may remember in passing, Merlin is called a mage (279-281):

And there I saw mage Merlin, whose vast wit  
And hundred winters are but as the hands  
Of loyal vassals toiling for their liege.

Excluding the four words I have specified — *O* and *mariner* Latin, *die* Old Norse, and *magician* Old Persian or Babylonian through Greek — the others of the first stanza are all Anglo-Saxon, as I have said. Does not this suggest that there are unsuspected possibilities in common words? We look at the familiar words of the first stanza, such as *haven*, *gray*, *eyes*, *wonder*, *follow*, and we say, 'Oh, yes, we know them.' Yes, but do we know them? If so, why cannot we do with them what Tennyson could? May it not



perhaps be that he saw deeper into them than we do? We are told of Lord Chatham, certainly one of the very greatest of English orators, that, in addition to much practice in translating from Demosthenes, and learning by heart many of the sermons of Barrow, 'he went twice through the folio dictionary of Bailey (the best before that of Johnson), examining each word attentively, dwelling on its peculiar import and modes of construction, and thus endeavoring to bring the whole range of our language completely under his control.'<sup>1</sup> Why should he not have confined himself, it might be thought, to the uncommon and difficult words? Why examine *each* word attentively, and dwell not only on its peculiar import, but also on its modes of construction? Cannot a person of literary ambition, desirous to be a commanding orator or laureate poet, do better than that? Apparently not; or at least there seems to be an advantage in his doing that, whatever better things he may do.

'But,' you say, 'it is not the words, but the way they are put together.' Just so; Lord Chatham had apparently thought of this, too. Or you say, 'It is not the words, but the music of the verse.' Let us see. The verse of *Merlin and The Gleam* follows the same pattern as that of the dozen years earlier *Battle of Brunanburh*,

<sup>1</sup> Goodrich, *Select British Eloquence*, p. 52.



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which Tennyson is supposed to have constructed on an Old English model. Listen to the first stanza of that poem: —

Athelstan King,  
Lord among Earls,  
Bracelet-bestower and  
Baron of Barons,  
He with his brother,  
Edmund Atheling,  
Gaining a lifelong  
Glory in battle,  
Slew with the sword-edge  
There by Brunanburh,  
Brake the shield-wall,  
Hewed the linden-wood,  
Hacked the battle-shield,  
Sons of Edward with hammered brands.

Does that seem to you the magical and mystical melody of the later poem? Or does this?

Slender reason had  
*He* to be glad of  
The clash of the war-glaive —  
Traitor and trickster  
And spurner of treaties —  
He, nor had Anlaf  
With armies so broken  
A reason for bragging  
That they had the better  
In perils of battle  
On places of slaughter —  
The struggle of standards,  
The rush of the javelins,



The crash of the charges,  
The wielding of weapons —  
The play that they played with  
The children of Edward.

And now a stanza of the *Merlin* :

Then to the melody,  
Over a wilderness  
Gliding, and glancing at  
Elf of the woodland,  
Gnome of the cavern,  
Griffin and Giant,  
And dancing of Fairies  
In desolate hollows,  
And wraiths of the mountain,  
And rolling of dragons  
By warble of water,  
Or cataract music  
Of falling torrents,  
Flitted The Gleam.'

Compare individual lines from the two poems :

	Brake the shield-wall
with	
	Elf of the woodland ;
or	
	Hacked the battle-shield
with	
	Gnome of the cavern ;
or	
	The crash of the charges
with	
	By warble of water.



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Is it not evident that there is a difference, a difference which becomes cumulative and emphatic in the sweep of a stanza, or the totality of a poem? And are not these cumulative effects built up out of elements — of individual lines, if you will, but, in the last analysis, out of elements smaller than individual lines, namely, out of individual words?

Now here belongs a truth which is frequently overlooked. It is this: One does not truly and completely know a word, as Lord Chatham and Tennyson knew words, save through contrast and comparison. In a sense, one knows nothing save by contrast and comparison. Cold, they tell us, is absence of heat. It follows that he who does not know heat does not know cold, or at least is not in a position to appreciate degrees of cold. So, if we recur to the Anglo-Saxon words of the first stanza, we may say that he does not know *haven*, as Lord Chatham and Tennyson knew *haven*, who does not also know *harbor* and *port*. Now in the first three lines of the *Merlin* let us substitute *harbor* for *haven*, making also two other substitutions, and instead of

O young Mariner,  
You from the haven  
Under the sea-cliff,'

we shall have :



O young Sea-dog,  
You from the harbor  
Under the promontory.

That does n't sound right, does it? You say that the third line is too long. Well, it has seven syllables, and in the same poem we find

And streaming and shining on,

which also has seven syllables. Try this :

O young Skipper,  
You from the harbor  
Under the foreland,

and compare it with the original :

O young Mariner,  
You from the haven  
Under the sea-cliff.

As we reflect on the reasons why the one sounds right, as we say, and the other does n't, we shall discover that there are two principal ones, and perhaps only two. The first concerns the sound of the word in itself and in relation to others — the proportion of light and heavy syllables, the number and order of vowels, liquids, dentals, gutturals. Compare in this respect,

The crash of the charges

with

By warble of water.



The other relates to meaning and associations, and associations are sometimes more than half the meaning. Thus the word *skipper* ought to suggest to us *skiff*, or *ship* — words to which it is etymologically akin. It would be ignorance, or mischief, or sheer perversity that would insist upon any connection with the verb *skip*, or with *skipper* in any sense derived from the verb *skip*; yet if that association should arise of itself, how fatal it would be to our enjoyment of the stanza! But it does not need this particular association to bar the word; *skipper* will not do, and *sea-dog* will not do, nor will *promontory* do instead of *sea-cliff*. But why will not *harbor* do? If we look at Tennyson's use of it, we can perhaps determine. In *Enoch Arden* (115-6) we are told of Enoch that once

— Clambering on a mast  
In harbor, by mischance he slipt and fell.

Later in the poem, the officers and men of the ship which carried him back first made up a purse for him,

Then moving up the coast they landed him  
Even in that harbor whence he sailed before.

And now, in contrast with *skipper* and *harbor*, consider *mariner* and *haven*. First *mariner*, associated as it is with our thoughts of *The An-*



*cient Mariner*, and with the line of *The Lotus-Eaters* (173):

O rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.

And then *haven*, how it brings back —

And the stately ships go on  
To their haven under the hill.

Ask us if we know *haven*, *harbor*, *mariner*, and we confidently, almost scornfully, answer yes, that we cannot remember when we didn't know them; but isn't there a difference, after all, between knowing and knowing, between knowing as merely recognizing and knowing as possessing the inmost secrets of a word — the whole range of its melody, the whole hideousness of its cacophony, the whole train of shadowy forms which it evokes, stretching on and on with various degrees of palpability and evanescence, some bold and distinct, and others melting, like the faintest curl of a summer cloud, into the viewless air? But if we are to attain this — this sense not only of the word in itself, but of its contrasting values, and what we may call its combining power, we must have a much more extensive and perfect apparatus than at present. For this purpose we need concordances of many more authors, and lexicons of some — the means of confronting, not merely word with word, but context with context, passage with passage, poem



with poem. There is before me at this moment talent and industry enough to make priceless additions, in the course of two or three years, to our resources for exploring and evaluating the treasures of our tongue, and for providing teachers of literature with instruments for conveying to the minds and hearts of their students the most delicate, the most precious, the most vital products of all civilization. The tasks are comparatively simple; the most that they demand is industry and a devoted spirit, such industry and devotion as have linked inseparably, for all time, the name of Bartlett with the name of Shakespeare, and the name of Ellis with that of Shelley.

I had hoped to dwell at some length on stanza 4 of the *Merlin* poem — on the wild animals, in Old English ‘wild deer,’ from which the wilderness takes its name; on the griffins, and giants, and dragons, all of them Greek, yet bowing here to the Celtic enchantment; on *elf*, which is Germanic; on *fairy* — which originally meant not a being, but magic, and then fairy-land and fairy-folk, before it came to mean the individual fairy — and how *fairy*, or rather *fay*, comes from the Latin *fatum*, so that fairies are a kind of Fates; on *gnome*, and how Paracelsus, the Paracelsus of Browning’s poem, coined the name,



and the Jewish cabalists, long centuries before, perhaps evolved the idea; on all the downpour and crash of wild and ruining waters in *cataract*, and how it differs from *cascade*, and *waterfall*, and *fall*; on all the sweet humanities inherent in music, the art of the Muses, and how Plato calls the study of philosophy the noblest and best of music; <sup>1</sup> and then point out how Tennyson brings together these two magnificent words, *cataract* and *music*, in the same line. I might have gone over all the verbs which express the motion of the Gleam — and its rest — asking you to remark their variety, and their specific appropriateness in each instance; or I might have called attention to the twofold appeal to the senses made by the poem, how light and music conspire, how

Moving to melody,  
Floated The Gleam,

and how, when

The landskip darkened,  
The melody deadened.

I have wished, however, merely to do one thing — to show you by a few examples the relation of words to literature, in order to emphasize the relation of the study of words to the study of literature; to show you, if I could, that the study

<sup>1</sup> *Phædo* 61 A.



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of words might be so intense and penetrating as to conduce to the perception of literary value and beauty ; in short, to persuade you, if you needed persuasion, that there might be a study of linguistics which should be literary, as there might be a study of literature which should be linguistic.



## IV

### AIMS IN THE GRADUATE STUDY OF ENGLISH







## AIMS IN THE GRADUATE STUDY OF ENGLISH <sup>1</sup>

INTO an age of gold like ours, which is, by reason of that fact, an age of iron; into an age of strenuous endeavor, to what end men know not, and seem not to care; into an age of intellectual ferment, which precipitates nothing precious and substantial; into an age which everywhere seeks out origins, and ignores a Primal Cause; into an age which tosses in fevered unrest, reaching out blindly for a dimly apprehended good, are born, must be born from time to time, those who are to point to the fountains of cool water, to the true riches, to the Source and Aim of man's transitory life upon earth. They *must* be born, if matter is not permanently to enthrall spirit, the enduring to be even as the ephemeral; unless man is to reel back into the beast, and rage and wallow like the dragon of the slime. They must be born, or else, to man at least,

The pillared firmament is rottenness,  
And earth's base built on stubble.

<sup>1</sup> Address delivered at Princeton University, January 13, 1906.



How, when born, are they to be discovered, shown their appointed task, and so trained that they shall work effectively towards peace, harmony, justice, stability, and all the ends of spiritual being? This is the master-problem of the State, and the State delegates it, in large measure, to the University, as the University shares it, in turn, with its constituent bodies and with the educational agencies subordinate to it. How shall the true leaders of humanity be selected, and disciplined for their mission? This, I repeat, is the chief problem, as its solution is the prime function, of the University, since upon finding its answer the very existence of the State depends; and it is a problem which by no other agency can be solved so well.

Such being the case — for I assume that on this point there will be no dissent — there have been, and in that sense are, three classes of spiritual leaders who stand preëminent above others. They are not alone; they are powerfully reinforced by the representatives of other classes; but in the nature of things, and notwithstanding the deficiencies or unworthiness of individual members, they have stood, and deserve to stand, above all the rest. These three classes are: ministers of religion; poets; and teachers of the humanities — by humanities meaning the branches of learning which are concerned pri-



marily with the nobler spiritual achievements and possibilities of human nature.

Of these, the minister of religion, in his two-fold function of prophet and priest — Aaron and Moses in one — ought to be more serviceable to man than either of the others. His office is directly authorized by God; he is supposed to enter it with the fullest conviction and the most ardent zeal; he is inducted into it with the most solemn sanctions; he consecrates humanity at the three chief epochs or crises of its existence — before the cradle, the marriage-altar, and the tomb; and he is listened to with attention, if not always with reverence, whenever he speaks in his sacred character.

The poet represents for our purpose the whole confraternity of artists, partly because the range of his expression is wider than that of any other artist — since he can at once suggest sculpture and utter himself in music — and partly because he can search more deeply, and stir more powerfully, the secret places of the soul. Dante rules a more extensive domain than Giotto, or Fra Angelico, or Botticelli, and with a more absolute sway, since he rules them also. Even when we are inclined to object the variety of arts in which Michael Angelo excelled, we must not forget that Dante was his master, too. Now, the poet at his highest is the unaccredited ambassador from



heaven to earth. He is God's spy, unavowed, sent to unriddle the moral universe in the interest of man, to exhibit its cosmical beauty, to set it to music. With the poet we should class the philosopher of clearest and most piercing vision — such revealers as Plato, who suggest more than they can distinctly express.

The third class, the expounders of the humanities, comprises all true teachers of literature, history, and philosophy. They are the ones who build up in the spirit of their pupils, by the systematic processes of academic instruction, the vision of a noble past or of a noble future. The teacher of philosophy, by disclosing what is innate in man as man, points directly to future realizations of his true self. The gaze of the teacher of history or literature is rather retrospective, in so far as he tries to re-create the great past in the imagination of his hearers. But the philosopher must also rehearse the history of thought, while history and literature are full of inspiration for him who would work in the present. The historian deals primarily with man organized — politically, socially, or economically — and therefore seems often to be concerned with the shell or husk of things; yet there is no just reason why he may not view the past as keenly as Shakespeare. The business of the teacher of literature is essentially with the



heart of man, yet he may broaden his scope to contemplate ideal commonwealths, or the golden days of Pericles and the Antonines.

The teachers of literature are conventionally classified into teachers of Greek, of Latin, of Italian, French, German, English, and the like; yet for our purpose they have one common function, to make man free of his own heritage, to acquaint him with the hill-tops and dingles, the groves and streams, the highways and paths, of his own spiritual estate. What man has achieved, or conceived of himself as achieving, in the realm of spirit, is their common subject. Their provinces are not conterminous; they overlap, or are superimposed. No one can comprehend Latin literature who is not versed in its Greek antecedents, nor Italian or French literature who knows nothing of Latin writers, nor English literature who knows not something of all these. I am acquainted with a teacher of Homer who has Milton always on his tongue in the class-room, and a teacher of Milton who has ransacked the ancient classics for the materials which are woven into the fabric of *Paradise Lost* and the minor poems. Shorey's edition of Horace will occur to you all as a book replete with apt quotations from English literature, and this is as it should be. How should we like to be taught Goethe by a man whose imagination had never traveled to the



shores of the Mediterranean? What should we say of the teacher of Molière who knew nothing of Plautus and Terence, or the teacher of Wyatt and Surrey who knew nothing of Petrarch?

So far, then, as literature is concerned, we might appropriately have one great department, with the fullest coördination and interrelation among its several provinces. In it each teacher, nominally assigned to represent a nationality or an epoch, should be encouraged to make himself to some reasonable extent free of all, and, while emphasizing his own special branch of the total subject, should draw illustrations and comparisons from every quarter.

But the creators of literature, and the races of which they are the most eminent spokesmen, reveal themselves not alone through drama and lyric, through epic and prose narrative, regarded as wholes. Every fragment of such compositions, every minutest element, nay, every individual word, bears its proportion of the poetry diffused throughout the whole. Language, we are told, is fossil poetry; and it is so even when detached from its place in masterpieces, and even, to some extent, when it has never found its way into masterpieces at all. For the creative impulse in the heart of man discloses itself not alone in great syntheses, an *Odyssey* or a *King Lear*, but also in single phrases, even in single



words, as yet, perhaps, uncombined into anything properly to be called literature. Every such word, in each several language, has its own aura of associations, due to its primal meaning and to all the experiences through which it has passed since its birth. Just as grief and joy print their traces on the countenance, and just as the original configuration of the features is determined in large measure by heredity, so words acquire their peculiar character, — bearing, as it were, the stamp of many dies, which have impressed themselves in succession, and with varying force, upon the original physiognomy. Does *peace* or *joy* mean the same thing to us as *pax* or *gaudium* to Julius Cæsar? I trow not. Do *gaudy* and *joyous* suggest to us identical notions? Yet, according to our best information, they spring from the same original. The teacher of Greek or German, then — to confine ourselves for the moment to languages relatively underivative — has, besides his general interest in all literatures related to his own, a more particular interest in these fragments or elements of literature which we call words, or, collectively, language. Moreover, in the modern tongues at least, and most of all in English, he has to reckon with forms which have been derived from other languages, and with attempts, by means of native terms, to express thoughts which have ori-



ginated in earlier civilizations, and have been communicated from these older civilizations to the newer. Hence, much as the teacher of French or Italian — and the same thing applies, in a still higher degree, to the teacher of English — may need, when dealing with the linguistic portion of his task, to specialize within the native language itself, he needs hardly less to extend his survey to include those tongues which have had a direct and powerful influence upon the one he professes.

Incidentally, the teacher of Latin, or German, or other foreign tongue, must impart to the student such rudimentary knowledge of the language as shall enable him to read it, or possibly to write or converse in it; but this function may be regarded as distinctly subordinate to that upon which we have touched above. The drill-master in Latin paradigms, for instance, may be a useful member of society, but if he is merely or chiefly that, he belongs to a distinctly inferior class to that of the teacher of the humanities. Indeed, he must take good care that he do not become, both by precept and example, a propagator of inhumanities, since mere task-work, unilluminated and uncheered by the contemplation of ideal ends, tends rather to deaden, to degrade, and to brutalize than to soften and refine.



I have said that, in my opinion, there are three classes of men who, beyond any others, raise the human species out of savagery, or prevent it from relapsing into that state. These, I repeat, are the ministers of religion, the poets — a kind of generic term which designates the arts in general by the chief of all arts — and the teachers of the humanities. Now, viewed at the present juncture, what place — what rank, if you will — is to be held, is likely to be held, in the next generation or so, by the teacher of English in America? As one looks out over the face of the country, and over many parts of what we call the civilized world, he sees that, speaking generally, the professional minister of religion has virtually abdicated his function of authoritative spiritual leadership, largely because he is himself devoid of certitude regarding the things whereof it is his mission to speak. Either he doubts the truth of a divine revelation, or of a divine government of the world, or the genuineness of particular revelations, or the inferences which have been currently drawn from such particular revelations, or the systems which have been constructed from the supposed truths of revelation philosophically considered. Under such circumstances he necessarily ceases to be an authoritative spiritual leader, except as he deserves or obtains credence and following in his incidental character as poet,



or philosopher, or unavowed prophet. He loses all support from divine revelation as contained in a certain closed and canonical body of writings, or Scriptures, and all support from a coherent body of truths, representing the efforts made by certain master-minds, singly or in combination, to codify the truths of revelation in the light of nature and human experience. He stands by himself, and has just as much or as little authority as he can gain in his character of unaccredited seer, or *vates* ; he tells people what he personally has discovered, or passes on to them what he individually thinks best worthy of report in the writings of other men. In the discharge of this latter function — namely, in the reporting to others of what he discovers in books, with or without indorsement or criticism — he passes into our third class, and becomes little more than a teacher of literature.

As to the second class, the poets, there seem at present to be virtually none with a message, that is, none who announce with decision and persuasiveness a doctrine, or view of the moral universe, such as has power to stir men's souls and lift them above their customary and commonplace moods. Neither are there any who are concerned to present with cogency and charm the more compelling doctrines of an earlier time. The versifiers of the present have neither stolen



fire from heaven themselves, nor are they, with few and trifling exceptions, bearing torches of borrowed fire to kindle flame in the hearts of men. They are, for the most part, persons with a laborious or easy knack of melodious phrase-making, retailers of poetical truisms, recorders of certain aspects of the physical world, searchers after the eccentric and bizarre, or the like. Who is there that is at once fresh, vigorous, authentic, and inspiring? We do not even have their counterparts in prose, such men as Carlyle, or Ruskin, or Emerson, or Newman. Not only are the sun and moon gone from the heavens, but the great planets are extinguished, Orion has been flung from his lofty watch-tower, Sirius is dead, and both pole-star and Greater Bear have sunk beneath the baths of ocean.

As an example of meaningless modern verse, with just enough melody and trick of pretty phrase to give it plausibility, take the following, which is drawn from a current magazine :

At the silken sign of the Poppy,  
At a shop that is never old,  
Where the twilight silence lingers,  
It is there that dreams are sold.

There 's the scent of love's lost roses,  
The soft echo of childhood's laugh ;  
There 's the ring of empty glasses,  
For the white lips never quaff.



To the crimson sign of the Poppy  
 We shall come when the daylight dies,  
 When the curfew music quivers  
 'Neath the gray of evening skies.

Just beyond the gates of sunset,  
 Where the grim toll of death we pay,  
 We shall find the shop of dream-wares,  
 Where the poppies hang alway.

So we long for the dusk of twilight,  
 When with wealth or no earthly gold,  
 We shall come where sleep-flowers cluster,  
 To the shops where dreams are sold.

We see that, according to the new poetic creed, death is something more than an eternal sleep. It is a Celestial dream, fed with unlimited opium (to be consumed, we may suppose, in an imperishable pipe) — moistened by an imperceptible stimulant, malt or vinous, for this point is left undetermined — and perfumed by love's lost roses. Such verse sounds like a parody on itself, and reminds us of Calverley's caricature of some of the poetry of his own time :

In moss-prankt dells which the sunbeams flatter,  
 (And heaven it knoweth what that may mean ;  
 Meaning, however, is no great matter)  
 When woods are a-tremble, with rifts a-tween. . . .

In prose, take the exquisite preciousness of Mark Twain's famous screed, and see how easily it



might deceive the inattentive into the conviction that here was a prose poem of rarest charm :

It was a crisp and spicy morning in early October. The lilacs and laburnums, lit with the glory fires of autumn, hung burning and flashing in the upper air, a fairy bridge provided by kind Nature for the wingless wild things that have their home in the tree-tops and would visit together ; the larch and the pomegranate flung their purple and yellow flames in brilliant broad splashes along the slanting sweep of the woodland ; the sensuous fragrance of innumerable deciduous flowers rose upon the swooning atmosphere : far in the empty sky a solitary *œsophagus* slept upon motionless wing ; everywhere brooded stillness, serenity, and the peace of God.<sup>1</sup>

If now, putting aside contemporary poets and prose writers, we come down to our third class, the teachers of the humanities, and especially to the teachers of the various literatures, we find the condition of things somewhat as follows. Whatever, ideally considered, is the function of the teachers of German, French, Spanish, etc., we find them actually occupied, for the most part, in enabling their pupils merely to read those languages intelligently, so that they have comparatively little time for imbuing them with the virtues of the literatures themselves. In other words, they are discharging a necessary,

<sup>1</sup> *Harper's Magazine* 104, 264 (January, 1902).



but subordinate duty, growing out of their great mission as teachers of the respective literatures, but leaving in large measure the mission itself unfulfilled.

Among the humanities, Greek has for generations held an almost undisputed primacy, not without good reason. Now, however, we find its ministers, like those of religion, forced more and more to abdicate, or at least to consent to a retrenchment of their privileges. This is partly their own fault, I fear. They have insisted unduly upon what other people have regarded as mint, and anise, and cummin, neglecting the weightier matters of the law. They have not brought out of their treasure-houses things new, as well as things old. They have not sufficiently related their stores to the interests or needs of modern life. They have not considered themselves as hierophants of priceless mysteries so much as masters of a certain abracadabra, traditionally regarded as having a kind of magical potency.

Here, it would seem, are reasons enough why they have fallen, or are falling, from their high estate. But the cause is not less to be sought in the attitude of the public towards the real treasures of which they have been the appointed custodians. A democracy does not readily tolerate superiority of any kind. A materialistic age



does not contemplate with rapturous satisfaction the things of the spirit. The transcendent and the mystical are despised by people who imagine that physical science has unlocked, or is soon to unlock, the last dim and remote chamber of the universe, and flood it with the light of common day. The self-activity of the mind is irksome to those who respond only to sensual excitations, who can be thrilled only by the speed of an automobile, the soarings of an air-ship, or the sinkings of a submarine boat. People whose grandfathers could not read, and whose fathers barely learned to, feel that there is much for them to do before they begin to climb the far-off summits of Hellenic wisdom and beauty ; and indeed they are right. Those who are poor, and are determined to be rich, cannot see how Greek will give them the Midas-touch. Those who are rich, and consider no evil so dire as poverty, have their own realms of gold to travel in, and think those of Keats mean in comparison. In short, those who are prosaic find Greek too poetic, those who fancy themselves poetic find Greek too severe, those who like ease find Greek too hard, those who are barbarous find Greek too civilized, and those who are sophisticated find Greek too simple. ‘The reason why the seven stars are no more than seven is a pretty one,’ says the bitter fool to Lear, and the



reasons why Greek is not at present in favor, if not so pretty, are at least more numerous, and quite as decisive. The more honor to such a University as yours, which, mindful that a great University should not be the sport of every popular gust, still exalts Greek to a place of prominence, and abides in calm prevision of the time when it shall again come to its own.

As to Latin, it seems to have neither the immediate and pecuniary utility of French and German, nor the eminence which appertains to Greek. It is not to the same degree as Greek an instrument of generous nurture and high breeding, nor will it lend itself to the purposes of the market-place so readily as French and German. Yet if Latin is to pass into eclipse, its occultation is likely to be slower, partly because it is more easily learned than Greek, and will therefore serve for those who wish cheaply to acquire an aristocratic tincture, and partly because it has entered so largely into English and other modern tongues.

This brings us at last to English itself, the goal of all our devious wanderings. Now, while we must recognize, at once and unequivocally, the inferiority of the English teacher to the adequate minister of religion, or to the artist of penetrative imagination, we cannot help seeing that circumstances have devolved upon him a



task the more momentous because these guides and educators of the human spirit are absent from their appointed places, or raise nerveless arms to point aimlessly and convulsively to all the quarters of the heaven — and the earth. So, too, as long as Greek stood in the van, supported in more sober and pedestrian ways by Latin, the teacher of English could feel that his was a humbler place in the rear, that he was a useful auxiliary, but hardly a principal. Of late, however, conditions have changed so rapidly that this theory has ceased to be quite tenable. Greek no longer occupies the centre of the stage, but is retreating, rather unceremoniously hastened at times, towards the tiring-room and the exit. Is the stage to be left empty? That can hardly be. The most obvious candidate for the vacant place is English, and in fact English has been thrust forward with a rapidity almost alarming, in view of the fact that most of us who represent it have been brought up with a lower conception of our responsibilities, and with a more restricted view of our opportunities, than is indicated by the present exigency. Upon us, it would seem, the ends of the ages have come, and we are reminded of the words of Paul to the Corinthian brethren:

Neither let us try the Lord, as some of them tried, and perished by the serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them murmured, and perished by the de-



stroyer. Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come.

I well remember the impressive conclusion of an address before English students by a professor of Greek a couple of years ago, in which he warned them that English was now on its trial, as Greek had been, and that if English failed to answer the high expectations which had been formed of it, it would fall.

Perhaps it is now time for us to consider what are some of the demands at present made upon the professor of English. They are not all nominated in the bond of his election, but sooner or later he is made to smart under the consciousness that the public, or his academic colleagues, or his fellow-scholars, have reasonably been looking to him to do what he was never prepared for, what he is quite unequal to, and what, until a particular exigency has arisen, he may scarcely have reflected upon as belonging to his province.

Let me set down briefly, in topical form, some of these requirements, which, according to circumstances likely to occur in any individual experience, he may be called upon to meet. The teacher of English, then, or at least the University teacher, must

1. Speak and write the English language with propriety. His verbs must agree with their sub-



jects ; he must pronounce according to acknowledged standards, so far as there are such ; and he must use words in their accepted senses.

2. He must be able to make himself heard in addressing a class or an audience. He must enunciate distinctly, and speak with sufficient vigor to convey his full meaning, and, if possible, impress it upon his hearers. It may be said that so much, at least, should be expected of all teachers ; this is true, but the deficiency is more likely to be censured in the case of a teacher of English.

3. He must be sufficiently informed with respect to the history of his own and kindred literatures, and sufficiently versed in their masterpieces and critical works.

4. He must be filled with the spirit of the best literature — not of all literature, not even of all English literature, but of the best.

5. He must know good style, good composition, and good sense when he sees them, in both poetry and prose, and also bad style, bad composition, and nonsense. He must know why the good is good, and the bad bad ; and he must know varying degrees of goodness and badness, so as to pass rational judgment upon a work submitted to him.

6. He must be able to read with tolerable facility, and explain to others, the English of



all periods, from the days of King Alfred to the present.

7. He must be able to read the languages upon which English is chiefly dependent for vocabulary or literary influence.

8. He must know the pedagogical theory of his own subject, that is, of English considered comprehensively: its chief divisions and their interrelations, and the disciplines by which results of different kinds can be attained, whether by individuals or classes. Thus, in directing the affairs of a department as its head, he should be able to decide what subjects should be pursued under given conditions; what should be made obligatory, and what elective; in what order they should be disposed, having due regard to the average age and attainment of particular classes; and how to secure a climactic result.

9. He must know the scholarly theory of his subject, that is, what is the present condition of scholarship in English, and its chief deficiencies, as compared with the most developed subjects of like general character; and how to achieve the best scholarly results with the smallest expenditure of time and energy.

10. He must know the relations of English to other subjects of instruction, in order that he may avail himself of the assistance which may be gained from the work in those departments; in



order that he may secure for English its proper proportion of time and attention ; and in order that he may not trespass upon other departments, either by transgressing the due limits of his own, or by demanding an undue proportion of the time and energy of his students.

11. He must be able to win and maintain for himself a place as scholar or independent investigator. Without this he cannot count on the respect of his professional brethren in other institutions, and without their respect he cannot, in general, hope to secure and hold the highest respect of his immediate colleagues in other branches, of his departmental subordinates, of his students, of the discerning public — or even, I may add, of himself. Now, in comparison with his colleagues in other departments, it is doubly and trebly incumbent upon him to possess this respect, because he is succeeding to dignities and responsibilities which, it may easily be assumed, he has not earned, and does not merit.

12. He should be a gentleman, and, if convenient, a good fellow, in the better sense of that term.

Now who is sufficient for these things? Nobody ; we may as well frankly confess it at once. Yet which of these requirements shall we cut out? Shall we say that the person who professionally represents English scholarship, and the



beauty and splendor of English literature, is privileged to mispronounce it, to write ungrammatically, and to sign his letters 'Sincerely, John Jones,' as though there were some question of his being John Jones? May he mumble or drone before a class? May he be ignorant of *Paradise Lost* and Bacon's *Essays*, of the *Antigone* and the *Alcestis*, of Virgil and Juvenal, of Tasso and Molière, of Longinus and Aristotle's *Poetics*? May he, with a limited time in which to perform a task of great moment, of vital concern to the very existence of the Republic, teach the trashy and the ephemeral for lack of a sense of values, and thus for all time befuddle the judgment, and degrade the taste, of his pupils? May he, depending merely upon his own sensibility and intuitive perceptions, content himself with reading good literature aloud to them, or telling them to read it, without being able to explain wherein the goodness of good literature consists? May he already begin to regard Spenser and Skelton as Old English, find difficulty with Chaucer, and show that English before the coming of the Normans is quite beyond the pale of his knowledge and his sympathies? May he be unable to read Horace in the original, to avail himself of German investigations, and to learn from the French the secret of scholarship which is not pedantry, and of charm which is



neither shallow nor pretentious? May he, if a subordinate, be so unversed in the theory of his subject as not to understand how to make the branch he is teaching at the moment contribute, in an effective way, toward a total insight, or, if a leader, how to marshal his forces so as to win the completest possible victory over the forces of Chaos and old Night? May he, if he undertakes to beat back the limits of our present ignorance, be so untutored as to spend his energies upon tasks already accomplished, to undertake those that are relatively insignificant, or to be handicapped every moment by ignorance of his tools, or of the proper way of using them? May he, instead of dovetailing English in with other subjects in such a way as to assist his colleagues while drawing strength and support from them, be at liberty unconsciously to thwart their endeavors, or else so contract the bounds of his own department as to deprive it of its legitimate efficiency? May he be a man without standing in the court of his peers, a man of whom English teachers in other Universities have never heard, or whose name they mention only to scoff? Finally, may he be a boor, a man whose society his fellows shun?

These questions answer themselves, and yet is there any representative of English in an American University, who, judged fairly by these



standards, is in all respects fitted to occupy his place? If we are obliged to reply in the negative, it behooves us to see to it that the next generation is better supplied than our own. Grant that what we have sketched is an ideal, and, as an ideal, impossible of perfect realization, is it not our duty to strive toward it as resolutely as we may?

If now we address ourselves to the means that may be employed in training candidates for this high office, we are naturally impelled to consider, first of all, what agencies characteristic of our time may be invoked to further our efforts. We shall find, I think, upon a little reflection, that the present age is distinguished by these five things — by others, perhaps, but certainly, I believe, by these five :

1. A passion for discovery, and proximate or elementary classification, having primary reference to utility — the love of science.

2. A disposition to emphasize the notion of becoming, or, as a German would say, *das Werden* — an interest in evolution.

3. A readiness to perceive deity as permeative — to accept the doctrine of the divine immanence.

4. A passion for voluntary association — the club spirit.

5. A desire for social justice, or the common weal — philanthropy, the love of man as man.



You will see that these things — scientific zeal, insistence upon the doctrine of evolution, a willingness to entertain the idea of the divine immanence, the club spirit, and devotion to the cause of humanity — are all Greek, or at least that they were all enounced and illustrated in Greece, and that they are all, therefore, in some sense, phases of neo-paganism, or, if you dislike that word, neo-classicism, or neo-Hellenism. They by no means comprise all of Hellenism, and perhaps they do not comprise the best of Hellenism, but it is fair enough to call them all Hellenic.

Now, how may these five agencies be made to assist in the discipline of the spiritual leaders whom we call teachers of English? When winds blow, we let them turn our wheels; when streams descend, we float with their current, or transform their energy into electricity. We should be foolish if we were not in all ways economical, doing as little as possible against the grain. How, then, can we harness these forces, and direct them to the end we have in view?

Take first science. This can be made an instrument of training, and a producer of useful results, by means of the elaboration of indexes, glossaries, catalogues, phonological and syntactical monographs, and the like. These acquaint the student with facts, the raw material of science,



and induct him into the processes employed by his acknowledged masters, the methods of selection and arrangement without which science is impossible. As a propædæutic to original work of this kind, it is useful to have courses for the study of works which embody the spirit and method of science, and which afford opportunity for elementary practice on the part of the students themselves. The actual performance of the substantial tasks, and the subsequent publication of the results, should also gratify the social instinct — the instinct to associate oneself, at least in thought, with the life of humanity — and confer the sense of benefiting mankind. Of course the scientific impulse, if sufficiently deep and sustained, ought to eventuate in philosophy ; but it may accomplish much that is serviceable without going so far. Yet, useful as it is, we must be on our guard against overrating it, precisely because it is so emphasized by our times.

Next the notion of evolution. That impels one backward into the past, and prophetically into the future. It gives zest to all historical study, even of events and periods which until recently were thought dry and barren. It irrigates desert soil, so to speak, making it bud and blossom as the rose. It is this which has sent people back into Old English, and back of Old English into Gothic, and back of Gothic into Sanskrit and



the hypothetical Indo-European unity. In philology, it is made to bear fruit in monographs on the evolution of this or that literary form — the evolution of the drama, the epic, the essay, and the like, and in such studies of individuals as Texte's book on Rousseau, or Morel's on James Thomson, for instance, or Legouis's on Wordsworth. In France, Brunetière is the apostle of evolution in this form. It is, however, often posited in monographic investigations where the gaps in the material are sufficient to prevent the tracing of an evolution at all, or where evolution has been interrupted by disturbing forces, or where the human spirit has seemed to defy the principle of determinism. Do the Middle Ages fully account for Dante, or the Renaissance for Shakespeare? Yet, with much caution in its employment, lest it mislead and confuse the novice, rather than clarify and settle his ideas, it may be of real utility.

The idea of the divine immanence is related to that of evolution, and tends in a still higher degree, perhaps, to harmonize the phenomena of history, and provide a goal for the stumbling feet of science. If there is

One far-off, divine event,  
To which the whole creation moves,

then it must be not only because

Heaven lies about us in our infancy,



and lay about the whole universe in its infancy, but also because of

— Something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

This notion will serve as a living link between much of nineteenth-century poetry, for instance, and the poets and philosophers of Greece; and such living links, binding organically together the phenomena of various literary periods, cannot be too highly prized.

What I have called the club spirit may be utilized in the formation of associations for the study in common of various topics, or for the performance of coöperative undertakings like the New English Dictionary, the Dialect Dictionary, or the projected Tennyson Concordance<sup>1</sup> at Baylor University. Associations may take the form of Journal Clubs, for report on current periodicals, or Report Clubs, for calling attention to current professional publications of all kinds, or English Clubs of a more general nature, for the presentation and discussion of any subject which may properly come before it. Not less important is the promotion of general sociability and good fellowship, the value of which between

<sup>1</sup> Since this was written, a movement for a Concordance Society has been instituted.



kindred and aspiring souls may be illustrated from the University life of Tennyson and his intimate friends.

Devotion to the cause of humanity may be a strongly impelling force in the production of scholarly work, and thus render the student much more keen in the prosecution of the necessary propædeutical studies. A desire not to lose touch with humanity will be the best safeguard against egotistical and repulsive pedantry. Moreover, without the passion to serve humanity, the English teacher is likely to be of comparatively little use in the class-room, whereas with it, even if his training be somewhat defective, he may still accomplish something worth while.

It must be evident, I think, that the student has much to gain from the gratification of these impulses, which are at present so common that they may almost be called natural. But a disposition difficult to acquire, and indispensable to the attainment of the highest results, remains for us to consider. It is the disposition to discover, before it is too late, what are those principles and disciplines which underlie and condition deeper understanding and adequate elucidation of the texts with which the English teacher has to deal. Here let us recall Bacon's anecdote of Sir Amyas Paulet, who when he saw



too much haste made in any matter, was wont to say, 'Stay a while, that we may make an end the sooner.' And a particular application of it, which can hardly be too much pondered, is also from Bacon: <sup>1</sup> 'Another error . . . is that . . . men have abandoned universality, or *prima philosophia*; which cannot but cease and stop all progression. For no perfect discovery can be made upon a flat or level; neither is it possible to discover the more remote and deeper parts of any science, if you stand but upon the level of the same science, and ascend not to a higher science.'

Without insisting too much upon Bacon's *prima philosophia*, we shall be ready, I suppose, to grant that there are disciplines or branches of knowledge which, were it possible to compass them, would be of extreme utility to the professional student of literature. I have heard literary persons plume themselves upon a supposed congenital inability to comprehend mathematics. Again on this point let us hear Bacon, a scholar incapable neither of mathematics nor of literature: <sup>2</sup> 'Men do not sufficiently understand the excellent use of the pure mathematics, in that they do remedy and cure many defects in the wit and faculties intellectual. For if the wit be too dull, they sharpen it; if too wandering, they

<sup>1</sup> *Adv. Learn.*, Bk. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 2. 8. 2.



fix it; if too inherent in the sense, they abstract it. So that as tennis is a game of no use in itself, but of great use in respect it maketh a quick eye, and a body ready to put itself into all postures, so in the mathematics that use which is collateral and intervenient is no less worthy than that which is principal and intended.' So elsewhere Bacon says, in a familiar passage:<sup>1</sup> 'If a man's wit be wandering, let him study the mathematics, for in demonstration, if his wit be called away never so little, he must begin again; if his wit be not able to distinguish or find differences, let him study the schoolmen, for they are *cymini sectores*. If he be not apt to beat over matters, and to call upon one thing to prove and illustrate another, let him study the lawyers' cases; so every defect of the mind may have a special receipt.'

In speaking of these disciplinary subjects, I must not be understood to advocate that all of them shall be employed in the case of every candidate for an English professorship, though perhaps the error would not be worse than that which Bacon elsewhere reprehends, when he says:<sup>2</sup> 'In the handling of this science, those which have written seem to me to have done as if a man that professed to teach to write did only exhibit fair copies of alphabets and letters

<sup>1</sup> *Of Studies*.

<sup>2</sup> *Adv. Learn.* 2. 20. 1.



joined, without giving any precepts or directions for the carriage of the hand and framing of the letters.' To apply this to our own branch, it is not sufficient to say: 'Here is the body of English literature; come and read it, and then go and teach it.' No, various prerequisites are implied, and in a given case they might even be best secured by training in a physical science. Certain it is that the graduate student who in my experience accomplished the most — quantity and quality both considered — in the least time, was one who had been trained in experimental biology. But, whether the propædæutic ideally required be mathematics, or science, or philosophy, at all events, if we detect in the student certain 'stonds or impediments,' as Bacon calls them, we should either suggest that they be removed by some extraneous discipline, or else, as far as possible, ourselves devise the means by which they may be 'wrought out,' only bearing in mind the extreme difficulty of removing all sorts of stonds or impediments through the agency of English alone. So far as linguistic discipline is efficacious in these respects — and on other accounts as well — it is desirable, I believe, that there shall be for the graduate student a requirement with respect to the sight-reading of French, German, and Latin of average difficulty, and that the examination in this shall



be passed at the beginning of his course, or in any case not less than two academic years before he takes his degree.

Though the province of the English teacher and that of the parliamentary orator are not identical, yet the two have much in common, so that we may, perhaps, profitably remind ourselves of the amount and kind of labor undergone by some of the great English orators in preparation for their triumphs. Lord Chatham translated repeatedly from the orations of Demosthenes, learned by heart many of the sermons of Barrow, and went twice through the largest English dictionary then extant, scrutinizing every word in order, with its various meanings and modes of construction. One of his biographers says of him : ‘Probably no man of genius since the days of Cicero has ever submitted to an equal amount of drudgery.’<sup>1</sup> Charles James Fox was so thoroughly grounded in Latin and Greek from boyhood that he read them throughout life much as he read English ; but, we are told, ‘he always felt the want of an early training in scientific investigation, correspondent to that he received in classical literature.’<sup>2</sup> For many years William Pitt devoted himself to ‘the classics, the mathematics, and the logic of

<sup>1</sup> Goodrich, *Select British Eloquence*, pp. 52-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 438-9.



Arisotle applied to the purposes of debate.’<sup>1</sup> Perhaps these examples will suffice to show how far these great orators were from preparing themselves for their careers by the mere reading of English literature.

But besides the more disciplinary auxiliaries, there are certain branches of knowledge with which the deeper sort of English student needs to be acquainted. How could one, for instance, who knew nothing at first hand about the literature of Old French or Italian — to say nothing of Latin — go profoundly into Chaucer? And again, besides these, there are the methodical inquiries, such as those into the theory of literary study and the theory of English study taken as a whole, which are almost indispensable at the outset. As many as possible of these fundamental courses should be taken, I am inclined to think, at the beginning, and this for two reasons. If they are really fundamental, there will be constant use and application of them later, so that they can hardly be begun too soon. This is the first reason. The other is that which, if report be true, has actuated many editors in dealing with young men who wished to enter journalism, as well as theatrical managers in their interviews with aspirants to histrionic honors. It is that the person who mistakes a

<sup>1</sup> Goodrich, *Select British Eloquence*, p. 552.



velleity for a determination may be deterred at the outset from undertaking a career for which he is not fitted. There is no place in our profession for the sybaritic individual who merely wishes lazily to read pleasant books, and the sooner he can be turned to the right about, the better. At the risk of seeming to indulge in paradox, I will hasten to add that he who has not been a passionate reader of good literature from the age of ten, or thereabouts, up to the time that he begins graduate study, and who does not give promise of remaining a passionate reader of good literature to the end of life, should be gently, but firmly, discouraged from entering our profession. Such a person will certainly not have the enthusiasm which will carry him through the necessary toils, just as the shallow person, of whom I spoke above, will not have the insight to perceive what the necessary toils are. The oft-repeated story of the celebrated Porpora may be in point here, not only as showing the mastership requisite on the part of the teacher, but especially the enthusiasm and patience necessary on the part of the learner. The latest form in which I have seen the story is as follows:

It is said that a young man went to Porpora, who was one of the famous teachers at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and asked for tuition. Porpora replied that he would accept the youth as a pupil



only on condition that the student would agree to do precisely as the teacher told him. The youth consented, and the master wrote some exercises for him on four pages of music-paper. At the end of three years the young man was still studying this sheet. He called his teacher's attention to the fact, and Porpora said, 'Remember your promise.' At the end of the sixth year the young man went to his teacher in despair. He was still on the same sheet, and he was ready to abandon the struggle and throw himself into the river, when, to his surprise, Porpora said: 'Now, my son, you may go. You are the greatest singer in the world.' The teacher had written on that paper everything that could be done by a human voice, and Caffarelli, afterwards known as the Prince of Song, had mastered all.

We shall know the right-minded student by his recognizing, when it is presented to him, the truth of Aristotle's precept: <sup>1</sup> 'We must . . . consider towards which extreme it is that we ourselves are the most inclined to drift, for no two men have the same natural bent. Our test herein will be the pleasure or the pain which we feel upon each occasion. And we must strive to drag ourselves to exactly the counter course, much as they do who straighten warped timbers.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Nic. Eth.* 2. 9. 5.

<sup>2</sup> With this compare Ruskin's manuscript addition to *Sesame and Lilies*, Lecture III, § 122 (*Works*, ed. Cook and Wedderburn, 18, 169): 'Remember that all teaching that is true is



With respect to the desirability of a love for good literature, and a considerable acquaintance with it, on the part of the person who undertakes graduate study, we must remember that in three years only a limited number of course-hours can be taken to advantage, considering the severe demands made by each, and the amount of collateral reading they should require. I myself have been accustomed to reckon them as twenty, distributed through the successive years as about eight, eight, and four. This affords a minimum of time for the compassing of everything desirable, and therefore makes it indispensable to exclude the person who has to acquire in his graduate years a love for literature and a respectable acquaintance with it. If he must do this at such a late day, he will have time for nothing else. All the English literature that he openly pursues during this period

in a measure startling. Of the best and perfectest knowledge it is said, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me" [Ps. 139. 6]; but in its own measure all knowledge is wonderful. To learn the vivid radical meaning of a familiar word, to get sight of a new feature or harmony in a natural object, to apprehend the bearing of an unknown law — all these things are wonderful; and of any teacher who is rightly helping you, you ought always to feel, not "how right that is; I always thought that" — no — but "how strange that is; I never thought of that." But it follows, therefore, that all true teaching must be very slow, for you cannot receive many new thoughts or facts at once.'



should be in strictly methodical courses, such as will induct him into scholarly and pedagogical processes.

It may be objected that I lay too much stress upon the disciplinary side of graduate study. But to myself I seem to be in accord with all the chief theorists who have treated of Art in relation to Nature. All agree that the richest soil may produce abundant crops, though perhaps plentifully sprinkled with weeds, with little or no cultivation, just as very likely there have been and are most inspiring teachers of English who have had little of the training outlined above. All agree that moderately rich soil demands more continuous and careful culture. And all agree that a naturally thin and barren soil can be made to produce respectable crops only by the application of the most perfect means which science has at its disposal. I have never seen a soil too well cultivated, and I have never seen a teacher too well trained; but I have seen soils that produced poor crops in spite of thorough tillage, and I have seen teachers, to whom Heaven has denied temperament and intuition, who could never equal the performances of a Socrates, or a Mark Hopkins, or a James McCosh, if they had been trained by the greatest master of pedagogical science that ever lived.

And now, as we approach the end of this hur-



ried, though perhaps tedious, survey, we may perhaps ask how the bond of the varied exercises which we have recommended may be made to appear, especially as so many of these must be detailed and analytical. How shall the student be preserved from distraction and bewilderment? This is best done, I believe, by making the ground-tone of all the study one of synthesis and unity. A philosophical spirit should, if possible, pervade the entire instruction, even when scientific processes are most in evidence. If this is done, and sufficient opportunity is afforded the student to question his teacher concerning the relation of a given part to the ideal whole, he is not likely to fight as one that beateth the air, but every blow will stand a good chance of being delivered home.

Akin to this mode of procedure on the part of the teacher is another on the part of the student, and of no less importance. It is that which Bacon proposes, if I may once more quote him:<sup>1</sup> 'Wherefore we will conclude with that last point, which is of all other means the most compendious and summary, and again the most noble and effectual to the reducing of the mind unto virtue and good estate; which is, the electing and propounding unto a man's self good and virtuous ends of his life, such as may be in a reasonable

<sup>1</sup> *Adv. Learn.* 2. 22. 15.



sort within his compass to obtain.' But, since Bacon may seem antiquated, and certainly ignorant of our peculiar circumstances, give me leave to conclude with certain stanzas from a poem read before the Phi Beta Kappa society of Tufts College,<sup>1</sup> in June of the year just expired :

Libraries, tomes, we may command  
Through him who wields the Midas-hand.  
Who would command the sages may ;  
But who shall give us the desire  
To light a torch at wisdom's fire ?  
. . . . .

The dregs of all the nations here  
May seethe and fuse for many a year  
In this dull mass of commonness ;  
Yet by-and-by, to earth's surprise,  
Another type may crystallize.  
. . . . .

So, mad the rush and fierce the game,  
Till time shall this rude instinct tame,  
And men a deeper need discern,  
And burn to spend themselves to give  
Diviner joys to all that live.

A remnant is our hope — elect,  
Distinct, high-minded, circumspect,  
With grace and power to lead, and turn  
Ambition's self to grander goals,  
Unsought, unknown of meaner souls.

<sup>1</sup> Dwight M. Hodge, *No Room at the Inn, and Other Poems*, Boston, 1905.



And of that remnant, sane and sound,  
For ever be the Scholar found !  
No single good his vision fills ;  
Nor his the need all strength to spend  
Toward one self-seeking, vulgar end.

How shall this common mass be led,  
Made wistful after more than bread,  
Shown the true sense of all its ills ;  
How shall the larger vision come,  
If learning’s oracles be dumb ?

. . . . .

’T is ours, O brothers, to begin  
To bring a new republic in,  
To make the noblest autocrat;  
To win new love for art and song ;  
To show the gentlest may be strong ;

To make a knighthood of great souls,  
Whom honor’s finer sense controls —  
No petty priests of small reforms,  
But men who know the one deep need  
Of larger life with grander deed ;

To find new ways to Arcady,  
Though men deny such land may be ;  
To all that kindles, all that warms,  
To all who dream, and all who sing,  
To give a royal welcoming.







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